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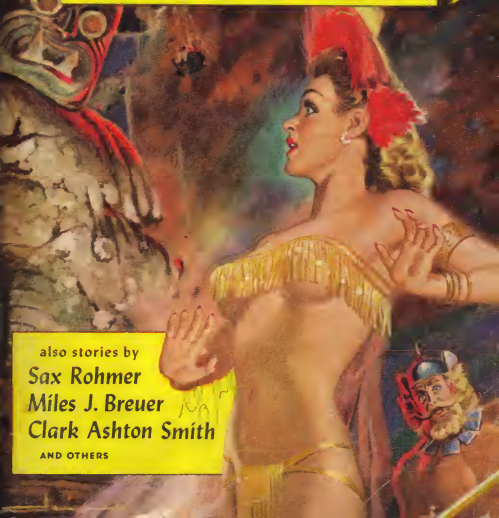
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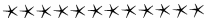
READER No.12

**THE BLONDE GODDESS OF
BAL-SAGOTH** by Robert E. Howard

also stories by
Sax Rohmer
Miles J. Breuer
Clark Ashton Smith

AND OTHERS





She Called for Help Across the Seas of Time—

The appeal of a beautiful girl in deadly peril is a cry to which red-blooded men have always responded. Though the time was the pre-Roman past and the place was the misty sea facing the enchanted shores of an unknown land, the primitive warrior-hero of Robert E. Howard's story heard the call and answered. He was Turlough, a rough-hewn Celt, and the girl whose anguished screams hailed him into the strangest adventure of a dangerous world was **THE BLONDE GODDESS OF BAL-SAGOITH**. You will thrill to the epic struggle of the mistress of witches whose monster servants had turned against her, and you will agree that there is nothing like a romance of primitive passions in a new new world to stir the imagination.

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—D. A. W.



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FANTASY READER

No. 12

Edited by

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BASSETT MORGAN MILES J. BREUER
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The Blonde Goddess of Bal-Sagoth

by Robert E. Howard

During his unfortunately too brief lifetime, Robert E. Howard was in perhaps a writer as anyone might hope for. He was that sort of natural writer to whom the speed of narrating a tale did not interfere with the quality. He liked to write—and that is the secret of most good fiction. And he loved nothing better than a busy, gaily told, of unreluctant men battling fiercely against a primitive environment. Add to that the fantastic color of the mystery and magic of the past; the horizons clouded with mist and fearsome legends; the bewilderment a conspiracy of supernatural powers; and fellow men nearly as dangerous and unpredictable as the beasts of the field, and a Robert E. Howard story is bound to be an epic of mind and fantasy. Here we have such a saga—a story of a Celtic barbarian's challenge to the age-old and fast-fading evil of an Atlantean remnant.

I. Steel in the Storm

LIGHTNING dashed the eyes of Turlogh O'Brien and his foot slipped in a stream of blood as he staggered on the reeling deck. The slashing of steel evoked the bellowing of the thunder, and screams of death cut through the roar of waters and wind. The incessant lightning flicker gleamed on the corpses sprawling redly, the gigantic horned figures that roared and snorted like huge demons of the midnight storm, the great beaked prow looming above.

The play was quick and desperate; in the momentary illumination a ferocious bearded face shone before Turlogh, and his sword arched out, splitting it to the chin. In the brief, utter blackness that followed the flash, an unseen stroke swept Turlogh's helmet from his head and he struck back blindly, feeling his ax sink into flesh, and hearing a man howl. Again the fires of the raging skies sprang, showing the Gael the ring of savage faces, the hedge of gleaming steel that hemmed him in.

Back against the mainmast Turlogh parried and snorted, then through the madness of the fray a great voice thundered, and in a flashing instant the Gael caught a glimpse of a giant form—a strangely familiar face. Then the world crashed into fire-shot blackness.

Consciousness returned slowly. Turlogh was first aware of a swaying, rocking motion of his whole body which he could not check. Then a dull throbbing in his head racked him and he sought to raise his

hands to it. Then it was he realized he was bound hand and foot—not an altogether new experience. Clearing sight showed him that he was tied to the mast of the dragon ship whose warriors had struck him down. Why they had spared him, he could not understand, because if they knew him at all, they knew him to be an outlaw—an outcast from his clan, who would pay no ransom to save him from the very pits of Hell.

The wind had fallen greatly but a heavy sea was flowing, which tossed the long ship like a chip from gulf-like trough to foaming crest. A round silver moon, peering through broken clouds, lighted the tossing billows. The Gael, raised on the wild west coast of Ireland, knew that the serpent ship was crippled. He could tell it by the way she labored, plowing deep into the square, heaving to the lift of the surge. Well, the tempest which had been raging on these southern waters had been enough to damage even such staunch craft as these Vikings built.

The same gale had caught the French vessel on which Turlogh had been a passenger, drifting her off her course and far southward. Days and nights had been a blind, howling chaos in which the ship had been hauled flying like a wounded bird before the storm. And in the very rack of the tempest a broken prow had loomed in the sea above the lower, broader craft, and the grappling irons had sunk in. Surely these Norsemen were wolves and the blood-hunt that burned in their hearts was not human. In the terror and pain of the storm they leaped howling to the onslaught, and while the raging heavens hurled their full wrath upon them, and each shock of the frenzied waves threatened to engulf both vessels, these sea-wolves glutted their fury to the utmost—but sons of the sea, whose wildest rages found echo in their own bosoms. It had been a slaughter rather than a fight—the Celt had been the only fighting man aboard the doomed ship—and now he remembered the strange familiarity of the face he had glimpsed just before he was struck down. Who—?

"Good hail, my lord Dolowman, it's long since we met!"

Turlogh stared at the man who stood before him, feet braced to the lifting of the deck. He was of huge stature, a good half head taller than Turlogh who stood well above six feet. His legs were like columns, his arms like oak and iron. His beard was of crisp gold, matching the massive armbands he wore. A shirt of scale mail added to his war-like appearance as the horned helmet seemed to increase his height. But there was no wrath as the calm gray eyes which gazed tranquilly into the smoldering blue eyes of the Gael.

"Athelstan, the Saxon!"

"Aye—it's been a long day since you gave me this," the giant indicated a thin white scar on his temple. "We seem fated to meet on nights of fury—we first crossed steel the night you banished Thorleif's

skull. Then I fell before your ax and you saved me from Beogar's Pets—alone of all the folk who followed Thorfel. Tonight it was I who struck you down." He touched the great two-handed sword strapped to his shoulders and Turlogh cursed.

"Nay, revile me not," said Athelstane with a pained expression, "I could have slain you in the prow—I struck with the flat, but knowing you Irish have craved hard skulls, I struck with both hands. You have been senseless for hours. Leifhrog would have slain you with the rest of the merchant ship's crew but I obtained your life. But the Vikings would only agree to spare you on condition that you be bound to the mast. They know you of old."

"Where are we?"

"Ask me not. The storm blew us far out of our course. We were sailing to hazy the coasts of Spain. When chance threw us in with your vessel, of course we seized the opportunity, but there was scant spoil. Now we are racing with the sea-flow, unknowing. The steer sweep is crippled and the whole ship lamed. We may be riding the very rim of the world for aught I know. Swear to join us and I will loose you."

"Sworn to join the hosts of Hell!" snarled Turlogh. "Rather will I go down with the ship and sleep for ever under the green waters, bound to this mast. My only regret is that I cannot send more sea-wolves to join the hundred-odd I have already sent to Purgatory!"

"Well, well," said Athelstane tolerantly, "a man must eat—here—I will loose your hands at least—now, set your teeth into this joint of mast."

Turlogh beat his head to the great joint and tore at it ravenously. The Saxon watched him a moment, then turned away. A strange man, reflected Turlogh, this scraggy Saxon who hunted with the wolf-pack of the North—a savage warrior in battle, but with hints of kindness in his make-up which set him apart from the men with whom he associated.

The ship reeled on blindly in the night, and Athelstane, returning with a great horn of foaming ale, remarked on the fact that the clouds were gathering again, obscuring the seething face of the sea. He left the Gael's hands unbound but Turlogh was held fast to the mast by cords about legs and body. The men paid no heed to their prisoner, they were too much occupied in keeping their crippled ship from going down under their feet.

At last Turlogh believed he could catch at times a deep roaring above the wash of the waves. This grew in volume, and even as the daffier-eyed Norsemen heard it, the ship leaped like a spurred horse, straining in every timber. As by magic, the clouds, lightning for dawn, rolled away on each side, showing a wild waste of foaming gray waters, and a long line of breakers dead ahead. Beyond the frothing madness of the reefs loomed land, apparently an island. The roaring

increased to deafening proportions, as the long ship, caught in the tide rip, raced headlong to her doom. Turlogh saw Lodbrog rushing about, his long beard flowing in the wind as he brandished his fists and bel-lowed battle commands. Athelstane came running across the deck.

"Little chance for any of us," he growled as he cut the Gael's bonds, "but you shall have as much as the rest——"

Turlogh sprang free. "Where is my ax?"

"There in that weapon-rack. But Thor's blood, man," marvelled the big Saxon, "you won't burden yourself now——"

Turlogh had snatched the ax and confidence flowed like wine through his veins at the familiar feel of the slim, graceful shaft. His ax was as much a part of him as his right hand; if he must die he wished to die with it in his grip. He hastily slung it to his girdle. All armor had been stripped from him when he had been captured.

"There are sharks in these waters," said Athelstane, preparing to doff his scale-mail, "if we have to swim——"

The ship struck with a crash that snapped her masts and shivered her prow like glass. Her dragon head shot high in the air and men tumbled like topknots from her slanted deck. A moment she poised, shuddering like a live thing, then slid from the hidden reef and went down in a blinding smother of spray.

Turlogh had left the deck in a long dive that carried him clear. Now he rose in the turmoil, fought the waves for a mad moment, then caught a piece of wreckage that the breakers flung up. As he clambered across this, a shape bumped against him and went down again. Turlogh plunged his arm deep, caught a sword-belt and heaved the man up and on his makeshift raft. For in that instant he had recognized the Saxon, Athelstane, still burdened with the armor he had not had time to remove. The man seemed dazed. He lay limp, limbs trailing.

Turlogh remembered that ride through the breakers as a chaotic nightmare. The tide tore them through, plunging their frail craft into the depths, then flinging them into the skies. There was naught to do but hold on and trust to luck. And Turlogh held on, gripping the Saxon with one hand and their raft with the other, while it seemed his fingers would crack with the strain. Again and again they were almost swamped, then by some miracle they were through, riding in water comparatively calm and Turlogh saw a lean fin cutting the surface a yard away. It swirled in and Turlogh unsling his ax and struck. Red dyed the waters instantly and a rush of sinuous shapes made the craft rock. While the sharks tore their brother, Turlogh, paddling with his hands, urged the rickety raft ashore until he could feel the bottom. He waded to the beach, half carrying the Saxon, then, iron though he was, Turlogh O'Brien sank down, exhausted and soon slept soundly.

2 Gods from the Abyss

Turlogh did not sleep long. When he awoke the sun was just risen above the sea-rim. The Gael rose, feeling as refreshed as if he had slept the whole night through, and looked about him. The broad white beach sloped gently from the water to a waving expanse of gigantic trees. There seemed no underbrush, but so close together were the huge boles, his sight could not pierce into the jungle. Athelstane was standing some distance away on a spit of sand that ran out into the sea. The huge Saxon leaned on his great sword and gazed out toward the reefs.

Here and there on the beach lay the stiff figures that had been washed ashore. A sudden snarl of satisfaction broke from Turlogh's lips. Here at his very feet was a gift from the gods, a dead Viking lay there, fully armed in the helmet and mail shirt he had not had time to doff when the ship foundered, and Turlogh saw they were his own. Even the round light buckler strapped to the Norseman's back was his. Turlogh did pause to wonder how all his accoutrements had come into the possession of one man, but stripped the dead and donned the plain round helmet and the shirt of black chain mail. Then armed he went up the beach toward Athelstane, his eyes gleaming unpleasantly.

The Saxon turned as he approached. "Hail to you, Gael," he greeted, "We be all of Loðberg's ship-people left alive. The hungry green sea drank them all. By Thor, I owe my life to you! What with the weight of my mail, and the crack my skull got on the rail, I had most certainly been food for the sharks but for you. It all seems like a dream now."

"You saved my life," snarled Turlogh, "I saved yours. Now the debt is paid, the accounts are squared, so up with your sword and let us make an end."

Athelstane stared. "You wish to fight me? Why—what —?"

"I hate your breed as I hate Satan!" roared the Gael, a tinge of madness in his blazing eyes. "Your wolves have ravaged my people for five hundred years! The smoking ruins of the Southland, the seas of spilled blood call for vengeance! The screams of a thousand ravished girls are ringing in my ears, night and day! Would that the North had but a single breast for my ax to cleave!"

"But I am no Norseman," rumbled the giant in warning.

"The more shame to you, renegade," raved the maddened Gael, "Defend yourself lest I cut you down in cold blood!"

"This is not to my liking," protested Athelstane, lifting his mighty blade, his gray eyes serious but unafraid, "Men speak truly who say there is madness in you."

Words ceased as the men prepared to go into deadly action. The Gael approached his foe, crouching panther-like, eyes ablaze. The

Saxon waited the onslaught, feet braced wide apart, sword held high in both hands. It was Turlogh's ax and shield against Athelstane's two-handed sword, in a contest one stroke might end either way. Like two great jungle beasts they played their deadly, wary game, then—

Even as Turlogh's muscles tensed for the death-leap, a fearful sound split the silence! Both men started and recoiled. From the depths of the forest behind them rose a ghastly and inhuman scream. Shrill, yet of great volume, it rose higher and higher until it ceased at the highest pitch, like the triumph of a demon, like the cry of some grisly ogre gloating over its human prey.

"That's blood!" gasped the Saxon, letting his sword-point fall, "What was that?"

Turlogh shook his head. Even his iron nerve was slightly shaken. "Some fiend of the forest. This is a strange land in a strange sea. Mayhap Satan himself reigns here and it is the gate to Hell."

Athelstane looked uncertain. He was more pagan than Christian and his devils were heathen devils. But they were none the less grim for that.

"Well," said he, "let us drop our quarrel until we see what it may be. Two blades are better than one, whether for man or devil—"

A wild shriek cut him short. This time it was a human voice, blood-chilling in its horror and despair. Simultaneously came the swift patter of feet and the lumbering rush of some heavy body among the trees. The warriors whirled toward the sound, and out of the deep shadows a half-naked woman came flying like a white leaf blown on the wind. Her loose hair streamed like a flame of gold behind her, her white limbs flashed in the morning sun, her eyes blazed with frenzied terror. And behind her—

Even Turlogh's hair stood up. The thing that pursued the fleeing girl was neither man nor beast. In form it was like a bird, but such a bird as the rest of the world had not seen for many an age. Some twelve feet high it towered, and its evil head with the wicked red eyes and cruel curved beak was as big as a horse's head. The long arched neck was thicker than a man's thigh and the huge taloned feet could have gripped the fleeing woman as an eagle grips a sparrow.

This much Turlogh saw in one glance as he sprang between the monster and its prey who sank down with a cry on the beach. It loomed above him like a mountain of death and the evil beak darted down, denting the shield he raised and staggering him with the impact. At the same instant he struck, but the keen ax sank harmlessly into a cushioning mass of spiky feathers. Again the beak flashed at him and his sidelong leap saved his life by a hair's breadth. And then Athelstane ran on, and bracing his feet wide, swung his great sword with both hands and all his strength. The mighty blade sheared through one of the tree-like legs below the knee, and with an abhor-

rust screech, the monster sank on its side, flapping its short heavy wings wildly. Turlogh drove the back-spike of his ax between the glaring red eyes and the gigantic hind kicked convulsively and lay still.

"Thor's blood!" Athelstane's gray eyes were blazing with hostile lust, "Truly we've come to the rim of the world——"

"Watch the forest lest another come forth," snapped Turlogh, turning to the woman who had scrambled to her feet and stood panting, eyes wide with wonder. She was a splendid young animal, tall, clean-limbed, slim and shapely. Her only garment was a sheer bit of silk hung carelessly about her hips. But though the scantiness of her dress suggested the savage, her skin was snowy white, her loose hair of purest gold and her eyes gray. Now she spoke hastily, stammeringly, in the tongue of the Norse, as if she had not so spoken in years.

"You—who are you men? Whence come you? What do you on the Isle of the Gods?"

"Thor's blood!" rumbled the Saxon. "She's of our own kind!"

"Not mine!" snapped Turlogh, unable even in that moment to forget his hate for the people of the North.

The girl looked curiously at the two. "The world must have changed greatly since I left it," said she, evidently in full control of herself once more, "for how is it that wolf and wild bull hunt together? By your black hair, you are a Gael, and you, big man, have a star in your speech that can be naught but Saxon."

"We are two outcasts," answered Turlogh. "You see these dead men lying the strand? They were the crew of the dragon ship which bore us here, storm-driven. This man, Athelstane, once of Wessex, was a swerdman on that ship and I was a captive. I am Turlogh Dubh, once a chief of Clan na Oibren. Who are you and what land is this?"

"This is the oldest land in the world," answered the girl, "Rome, Egypt, Cathay are as but infants beside it. I am Bruthild, daughter of Rane Thurfia's son, of the Orkneys, and until a few days ago, queen of this ancient kingdom."

Turlogh looked uncertainly at Athelstane. This sounded like victory.

"After what we have just seen," rumbled the giant, "I am ready to believe anything. But are you in truth Rane Thurfia's son's stolen child?"

"Aye!" cried the girl, "I am that one! I was stolen when Tostig the Mad raided the Orkneys and burned Rane's standing in the absence of its master——"

"And then Tostig vanished from the face of the earth—or the sea!" interrupted Athelstane, "He was in truth a madman. I sailed with him for a ship-harrying many years ago when I was but a youth."

"And his madness cast me on this island," answered Bruthild, "for after he had harried the shores of England, the fire in his brain drove him out into unknown seas—south and south and ever south until even

the fierce wolves he led imprisoned. Then a storm drove us on yonder reef, though at another point, sending the dragon ship even as yours was wrecked last night. Tostig and all his strong men perished in the waves, but I clung to pieces of wreckage and a whirl of the gods cast me ashore, half dead. I was fifteen years old. That was ten years ago.

"I found a strange terrible people dwelling here, a brown-skinned folk who knew many dark secrets of magic. They found me lying senseless on the beach and because I was the first white human they had ever seen, their priests divined that I was a goddess given them by the sea, whom they worship. So they put me in the temple with the rest of their curious gods and did reverence to me. And their high-priest, old Gathan—curse be his name!—taught me many strange and fearful things. Soon I learned their language and much of their priests' inner mysteries. And as I grew into womanhood the desire for power stirred in me, for the people of the North are made to rule the folk of the world, and it is not for the daughter of a sea-king to sit meekly in a temple and accept the offerings of fruit and flowers and human sacrifices!"

She stopped for a moment, eyes blazing. Truly, she looked a worthy daughter of the fierce race she claimed.

"Well," she continued, "there was one who loved me—Kotar, a young chief. With him I plotted and at last I rose and flung off the yoke of old Gathan. That was a wild season of plot and counter-plot, intrigue, rebellion and red carnage! Men and women died like flies and the streets of Bal-Sagoth ran red—but in the end we triumphed, Kotar and I! The dynasty of Angar came to an end on a night of blood and fury and I reigned supreme on the Isle of the Gods, queen and goddess!"

She had drawn herself up to her full height, her beautiful face alight with fierce pride, her bosom heaving. Turlegh was at once fascinated and repelled. He had seen rulers rise and fall, and between the lines of her brief narrative he read the bloodshed and carnage, the cruelty and the treachery—seeing the basic ruthlessness of this girl-woman.

"But if you were queen," he asked, "how is it that we find you hunted through the forests of your domain by this monster, like a runaway serving wench?"

Bramhild hit her lip and an angry flush mounted to her cheeks. "What is it that brings down every woman, whatever her station? I trusted a man—Kotar, my lover, with whom I shared my rule. He betrayed me, after I had raised him to the highest power in the kingdom, next to my own, I found he secretly made love to another girl. I killed them both!"

Turlegh smiled coldly. "You are a true Bramhild! And then what?"

"Kotar was loved by the people. Old Gathan stirred them up. I

made my greatest mistake when I let that old one live. Yet I dared not slay him. Well, Cothan rose against me, as I had then against him, and the warriors rebelled, slaying those who stood faithful to me. Me they took captive but dared not kill, for after all, I was a goddess, they believed. So before dawn, fearing the people would change their minds again and restore me to power, Cothan had me taken to the lagoon which separates this part of the island from the other. The priests rowed me across the lagoon and left me, naked and helpless, to my fate."

"And that fate was--this?" Athelstane touched the huge carcass with his foot.

Branhild shuddered. "Many ages ago there were many of these monsters on the isle, the legends say. They warred on the people of Bal-Sagoth and devoured them by hundreds. But at last all were exterminated on the main part of the isle and on this side of the lagoon all died but this one, who has abided here for centuries. In the old times hosts of men came against him, but he was greater of all the devil-birds and he slew all who fought him. So the priests made a god of him and left this part of the island to him. None comes here except those brought as sacrifices--as I was. He could not cross to the main island, because the lagoon swarms with great sharks which would rend even him to pieces."

"For a while I eluded him, stealing among the trees, but at last he spotted me out--and you know the rest. I owe my life to you. Now what will you do with me?"

Athelstane looked at Turlogh and Turlogh shrugged. "What can we do, were starve in this forest?"

"I will tell you!" the girl cried in a ringing voice, her eyes blazing anew to the swift working of her keen brain. "There is an old legend among this people--that men of iron will come out of the sea and the city of Bal-Sagoth will fall! You, with your mail and helmets, will seem as iron men to these folk who know nothing of armor! You have slain Croth-gulka the his-d-god--you have come out of the sea as did I--the people will look on you as gods. Come with me and aid me to win back my kingdom! You shall be my right-hand men and I will keep honors on you! Fine garments, gorgeous palaces, fairest girls shall be yours!"

Her promises slid from Turlogh's mind without leaving an imprint, but the mad splendor of the proposal intrigued him. Strongly he desired to look on this strange city of which Branhild spoke, and the thought of two warriors and one girl pitted against a whole nation for a crown stirred the utmost depths of his knight-errant Celtic soul.

"It is well," said he. "And what of you, Athelstane?"

"My belly is empty," growled the giant. "Lead me to where there is food and I'll hew my way to it, through a herd of priests and warriors."

"Lead us to this city!" said Turlogh to Brunhild.

"Hail!" she cried flinging her white arms high in wild exultation. "Now let Gothan and Ska and Gella tremble! With ye at my side I'll win back the crown they tore from me, and this time I'll not spare my enemy! I'll haul old Gothan from the highest battlement, though the howling of his demons shake the very bowels of the earth! And we shall see if the god Gal-groth shall stand against the sword that cut Groth-golka's leg from under him. Now hew the head from this carcass that the people may know you have overcome the bird-god. Now follow me, for the sun mounts the sky and I would sleep in my own palace tonight!"

The three passed into the shadows of the mighty forest. The interlocking branches, hundreds of feet above their heads, made dim and strange such sunlight as filtered through. No life was seen except for an occasional gayly-hued bird or a huge ape. These beasts, Brunhild said, were survivors of another age, harmless except when attacked. Presently the growth changed somewhat, the trees thinned and became smaller and fruit of many kinds was seen among the branches. Brunhild told the warriors which to pluck and eat as they walked along. Turlogh was quite satisfied with the fruit, but Athelstane, though he ate curiously, did so with scant relish. Fruit was light sustenance to a man used to such solid stuff as formed his regular diet. Even among the gluttonous Danes the hero's capacity for beef and ale was admired.

"Look!" cried Brunhild sharply, halting and pointing. "The spirits of Bal-Sagoth!"

Through the trees the warriors caught a glimmer, white and shimmering, and apparently far away. There was an illusory impression of towering battlements, high in the air, with heavy clouds hovering about them. The sight woke strange dreams in the mystic deeps of the Gael's soul, and even Athelstane was silent as if he too were struck by the pagan beauty and mystery of the scene.

So they progressed through the forest, now losing sight of the distant city as tree tops obstructed the view, now seeing it again. And at last they came out on the low shelving banks of a broad blue lagoon and the full beauty of the landscape burst upon their eyes. From the opposite shores the country sloped upward in long gentle undulations which looked like great slow waves at the foot of a range of blue hills a few miles away. These wide swells were covered with deep grass and many groves of trees, while miles away on either hand there was seen curving away into the distance the strip of thick forest which Brunhild said belted the whole island. And among those blue towering hills brooded the age-old city of Bal-Sagoth, its white walls and zephyrine towers clean-cut against the morning sky. The suggestion of great distance had been an illusion.

"Is that not a kingdom worth fighting for?" cried Brumhild, her voice vibrant. "Swift now—let us bind this dry wood together for a raft. We could not live an instant swimming in that shark-haunted water."

At that instant a figure leaped up from the tall grass on the other shore—a naked, brown-skinned man who stared for a moment, agape. Then as Athelstane shouted and held up the grim head of Croth-golka, the fellow gave a startled cry and raced away like an antelope.

"A slave Cothan left to see if I tried to swim the lagoon," said Brumhild with angry satisfaction. "Let him run to the city and tell them—but let us make haste and cross the lagoon before Cothan can arrive and dispute our passage."

Tuslogh and Athelstane were already busy. A number of dead trees lay about and these they stripped of their branches and bound together with long vines. In a short time they had built a raft, crude and clumsy, but capable of bearing them across the lagoon. Brumhild gave a frank sigh of relief when they stopped on the other shore.

"Let us go straight to the city," said she. "The slave has reached it ere now and they will be watching us from the walls. A bold course is our only one. Thor's hammer, but I'd like to see Cothan's face when the slave tells him Brumhild is returning with two strange warriors and the head of him to whom she was given as sacrifice!"

"Why did you not kill Cothan when you had the power?" asked Athelstane.

She shook her head, her eyes flashing with something akin to fear. "Easier said than done. Half the people hate Cothan, half love him, and all fear him. The most ancient men of the city say that he was old when they were babes. The people believe him to be more god than priest, and I myself have seen him do terrible and mysterious things, beyond the power of a common man.

"Nay, when I was but a puppet in his hands, I came only to the outer fringe of his mysteries, yet I have looked on sights that haaze my blood. I have seen strange shadows flit along the midnight walls, and groping along black subterranean corridors in the dead of night I have heard unshadowed sounds and have felt the presence of hideous beings. And once I heard the grisly shivering bellowsings of the nameless Thing Cothan has chained deep in the bowels of the hills on which rests the city of Bal-Sagoth."

Brumhild shuddered.

"There are many gods in Bal-Sagoth, but the greatest of all is Gol-goroth, the god of darkness who sits forever in the Temple of Shadows. When I overthrew the power of Cothan, I forbade men to worship Gol-goroth, and made the priests hail, as the one true deity, A-ah, the daughter of the sea—myself. I had strong men take heavy hammers and smite the image of Gol-goroth, but their blows only shattered the hammers and gave strange hurts to the men who wicked them. Gol-

goroth was indestructible and showed no mar. So I desisted and shut the doors of the Temple of Shadows which were opened only when I was overthrown and Gothan, who had been skulking in the secret places of the city, came again into his own. Then Gal-goroth reigned again in his full terror and the idols of A-sla were overthrown in the Temple of the Sea, and the priests of A-sla died howling on the red-stained altar before the black god. But now we shall see!"

"Surely you are a very Valkyrie," muttered Athabstane. "But three against a nation is great odds—especially such a people as this, who must assuredly be all witches and sorcerers."

"Bah!" cried Brunfeld contemptuously. "there are many sorcerers, it is true, but though the people are strange to us, they are mere fools in their own way, as are all nations. When Gothan led me captive down the streets they spit on me. Now watch them turn on Ska, the new king Gothan has given them, when it seems my star rises again! But now we approach the city gates—be bold but wary!"

They had ascended the long swelling slopes and were not far from the walls which rose immensely upward. Surely, thought Turlogh, heathen gods built this city. The walls seemed of marble and with their fretted battlements and slim watch-towers, dwarfed the memory of such cities as Rome, Damascus and Byzantium. A broad white winding road led up from the lower levels to the plateau before the gates and as they came up this road, the three adventurers felt hundreds of hidden eyes fixed on them with fierce intensity. The walls seemed deserted; it might have been a dead city. But the impact of those staring eyes was felt.

Now they stood before the massive gates, which to the amazed eyes of the warriors seemed to be of chased silver.

"Here is an emperor's ransom!" muttered Athabstane, eyes ablaze. "Thor's blood, if we had but a stout band of reavers and a ship to carry away the plunder!"

"Strike on the gate and then step back, lest something fall upon you," said Brunfeld, and the thunder of Turlogh's ax on the portals woke the echoes in the sleeping hills.

The three then fell back a few paces and suddenly the mighty gates swung inward and a strange concourse of people stood revealed. The two white warriors looked on a pageant of barbaric grandeur. A throng of tall, slim, brown-skinned men stood in the gates. Their only garments were loin-cloths of silk, the fine work of which contrasted strangely with the near nudity of the wearers. Tall waving plumes of many colors decked their heads, and armlets and leglets of gold and silver, crusted with gleaming gems, completed their ornamentation. Armor they wore none, but each carried a light shield on his left arm, made of hard wood, highly polished, and beaced with silver. Their weapons were slim-bladed spears, light hatchets and slender daggers,

all bladed with fine steel. Evidently these warriors depended more on speed and skill than on brute force.

At the front of this band stood three men who instantly commanded attention. One was a lean hawk-faced warrior, almost as tall as Athelstane, who wore about his neck a great golden chain from which was suspended a curious symbol in jade. One of the other men was young, evil-eyed, an imperious riot of colors in the mantle of parrot-leathers which swung from his shoulders. The third man had nothing to set him apart from the rest save his own strange personality. He wore no mantle, bore no weapons. His only garment was a plain tunic. He was very old, he alone of all the throng was bearded, and his beard was as white as the long hair which fell about his shoulders. He was very tall and very lean, and his great dark eyes blazed as from a hidden fire. Turloch knew without being told that this man was Githan, priest of the Black God. The ancient exuded a very aura of age and mystery. His great eyes were like windows of some forgotten temple, behind which passed like ghosts his dark and terrible thoughts. Turloch sensed that Githan had delved too deep in forbidden secrets to remain altogether human. He had passed through doors that had cut him off from the dreams, desires and emotions of ordinary mortals. Looking into those unflinching orbs Turloch felt his skin crawl, as if he had looked into the eyes of a great serpent.

Now a glance upward showed that the walls were thronged with silent dark-eyed folk. The stage was set, all was in readiness for the swift, red drama. Turloch felt his pulse quicken with fierce exhilaration and Athelstane's eyes began to glow with ferocious light.

Brunhild stepped forward boldly, head high, her upturned figure vibrant. The white warriors actually could not understand what passed between her and the others, except as they read from gestures and expressions, but later Brunhild narrated the conversation almost word for word.

"Well, people of Bal-Sagoth," said she, spouting her words slowly, "what waste have you for your goddess whom you mocked and reviled?"

"What will you have, false one?" exclaimed the tall man, Ska, the king set up by Githan, "you who mocked at the customs of our ancestors, defied the laws of Bal-Sagoth, which are older than the world, murdered your lover and defiled the shrine of Gel-goroth? You were doomed by law, king and god and placed in the grim forest beyond the Lagon—"

"And I, who am likewise a goddess and greater than any god," answered Brunhild mockingly, "am returned from the realm of honor with the head of Groth-golka!"

At a word from her, Athelstane held up the great beaked head, and

a low whispering ran about the battlements, tense with fear and bewilderment.

"Who are these men?" Ska bent a worried frown on the two warriors.

"They are iron men who have come out of the sea!" answered Brunhild in a clear voice that carried far, "the beings who have come in response to the old prophecy, to overthrow the city of Bal-Sagoth, whose people are traitors and whose priests are false!"

At these words the fearful murmur broke out afresh all up and down the line of the walls, till Gothan lifted his vulture-head and the people fell silent and shrank before the icy stare of his terrible eyes.

Ska glared bewilderedly, his ambition struggling with his superstitious fears.

Turlogh, looking closely at Gothan, believed that he read beneath the inscrutable mask of the old priest's face. For all his inhuman wisdom, Gothan had his limitations. This sudden return of one he thought well disposed of, and the appearance of the white-skinned giants accompanying her, had caught Gothan off his guard. Turlogh believed, rightly. There had been no time to properly prepare for their reception. The people had already begun to murmur in the streets against the severity of Ska's brief rule. They had always believed in Brunhild's divinity; now that she returned with two tall men of her own hue, bearing the grim trophy that marked the conquest of another of their gods, the people were wavering. Any small thing might turn the tide either way.

"People of Bal-Sagoth!" shouted Brunhild suddenly, springing back and flung her arms high, gazing full into the faces that looked down at her, "I bid you avert your doom before it is too late! You cast me out and spat on me, you turned to darker gods than I! Yet all this will I forgive if you return and do obedience to me! Once you reviled me—you called me bloody and cruel! True, I was a hard mistress—but has Ska been an easy master? You said I lashed the people with whips of rawhide—has Ska stroked you with parrot feathers?"

"A virgin died on my altar at the full tide of each moon—but youths and maidens die at the waning and the waxing, the rising and the setting of each moon, before Gal-goroth, on whose altar a fresh human heart forever flows! Ska is but a shadow! Your real lord is Gothan, who sits above the city like a vulture! Once you were a mighty people; your galleys filled the seas. Now you are a remnant and that is dwindling fast! Fools! You will all die on the altar of Gal-goroth ere Gothan is done and he will stalk alone among the silent ruins of Bal-Sagoth!"

"Look at him!" her voice rose to a scream as she lashed herself to an inspired frenzy, and even Turlogh, to whom the words were meaningless, shivered. "Look at him where he stands there like an evil spirit

out of the past! He is not even human! I tell you, he is a foul ghost, whose beard is dabbled with the blood of a million butcheries—an enormous fiend out of the mist of the ages come to destroy the people of Bal-Sagoth!

"Choose now! Rise up against that ancient devil and his blasphemous gods, rescue your rightful queen and deny again and you shall regain some of your former greatness. Refuse, and the ancient prophecy shall be fulfilled and the sun will set on the silent and crumpled ruins of Bal-Sagoth!"

Fired by her dynamic words, a young warrior with the insignia of a chief spring to the parapet and shouted: "Hail to A-ah! Drown with the bloody gods!"

Among the multitude many took up the shout and steel clashed as a score of fights started. The crowd on the battlements and in the streets surged and eddied, while Ska glared, bewildered. Brunhild, forcing back her companions who quivered with eagerness for action of some kind, shouted: "Hold! Let no man strike a blow yet! People of Bal-Sagoth, it has been a tradition since the beginning of time that a king must fight for his crown! Let Ska cross steel with one of these warriors! If Ska wins, I will kneel before him and let him strike off my head! If Ska loses, then you shall accept me as your rightful queen and goddess!"

A great roar of approval went up from the walls as the people ceased their brawls, glad enough to shift the responsibility to their ruler:

"Will you fight, Ska?" asked Brunhild, turning to the king mockingly. "Or will you give me your head without further arguments?"

"Shut!" howled Ska, driven to madness, "I will take the skulls of these fools for drinking-cups, and then I will send you between two bent trees!"

Getham laid a hand on his arm and whispered in his ear, but Ska had reached the point where he was deaf to all but his fury. His achieved ambition, he had found, had led to the mere part of a puppet dancing on Getham's string; now even the hollow haub of his kingship was slipping from him and this wench mocked him to his face before his people. Ska went, to all practical effects, stark mad.

Brunhild turned to her two allies. "One of you must fight Ska."

"Let me be the one!" urged Turlogh, eyes dancing with eager battle-lust. "He has the look of a man quick as a wildcat, and Athelstane, while a very bull for strength, is a thought slow for such work—"

"Slow!" broke in Athelstane reproachfully. "Why, Turlogh, he a man my weight—"

"Enough," Brunhild interrupted. "He must choose for himself."

She spoke to Ska, who glared red-eyed for an instant then indicated

Athelstane, who grinned joyfully, cast aside the bird's head and unsling his sword. Tunlough swore and stepped back. The king had decided that he would have a better chance against this huge buffalo of a man who looked slow, than against the black-haired tigerish warrior, whose cat-like quickness was evident.

"Thine Ska is without armor," growled the Saxon. "Let me likewise doff my mail and helmet so that we fight on equal terms——"

"No!" cried Brandrid. "Your armor is your only chance! I tell you, this false king fights like the play of summer lightning! You will be hard put to hold your own as it is. Keep on your armor, I say!"

"Well, well," growled Athelstane, "I will—I will. Though I say it is scarcely fair. But let him come on and make an end of it."

The huge Saxon strode ponderously toward his foe, who warily crouched and circled away. Athelstane held his great sword in both hands before him, pointed upward, the hilt somewhat below the level of his chin, in position to strike a blow to right or left, or parry a sudden attack.

Ska had flung away his light shield, his fighting-sense telling him that it would be useless before the stroke of that heavy blade. In his right hand he held his slim spear as a man holds a throwing-dart, in his left a light, keen-edged hatchet. He meant to make a fast, shifty fight of it, and his tactics were good. But Ska, having never encountered armor before, made his fatal mistake in supposing it to be apured or ornament through which his weapons would pierce.

Now he sprang in, thrusting at Athelstane's face with his spear. The Saxon parried with ease and instantly cut tremendously at Ska's legs. The king bounded high, clearing the whistling blade, and in midair he hooked down at Athelstane's bent head. The light hatchet shivered to bits on the Viking's helmet and Ska sprang back out of reach with a blood-lusting howl.

And now it was Athelstane who rushed with unexpected quickness, like a charging bull, and before that terrible onslaught Ska, hewl-felled by the breaking of his hatchet, was caught off his guard—flat-footed. He caught a fleeting glimpse of the giant looming over him like an overwhelming wave and he sprang in, instead of out, stabbing ferociously. That mistake was his last. The thrusting spear glanced harmlessly from the Saxon's mail, and in that instant the great sword sang down in a stroke the king could not evade. The force of that stroke tossed him as a man is tossed by a plunging bull. A dozen feet away fell Ska, king of Bad Sageth, to be shattered and dead in a ghastly welter of blood and entrails. The throng gaped, struck silent by the powers of that deed.

"How off his head!" cried Brandrid, her eyes flaring as she clenched her hands so that the nails bit into the palms. "Impale that cannon's

head on your sword-point so that we may carry it through the city gates with us as a token of victory!"

But Athelstane shook his head, turning his blade: "Nay, he was a brave man and I will not mottle his corpse. It is no great feat I have done, for he was naked and I full-armed. Like it is in my mind, the brawl had gone differently."

Turlogh glanced at the people on the walls. They had recovered from their astonishment and now a vast roar went up: "A-ah! Hail to the true goddess!" And the warriors in the gateway dropped to their knees and bowed their foreheads to the dust before Brunhild, who stood proudly erect, bosom heaving with fierce triumph. Truly, thought Turlogh, she is more than a queen—she is a shield woman, a Valkyrie, as Athelstane said.

Now she stopped aside and, tearing the golden chain with its jade symbol from the dead neck of Ska, held it on high and shouted: "People of Bal-Sageth, you have seen how your false king died before this golden bearded giant who, being of men, shows no single cut! Choose now—do you receive me of your own free will?"

"Aye, we do!" the multitude answered in a great shout. "Return to your people, oh mighty and all-powerful queen!"

Brunhild smiled sardonically. "Come," said she to the warriors: "they are lashing themselves into a very frenzy of love and loyalty, having already forgotten their treachery. The memory of the mob is short!"

Aye, thought Turlogh, as at Brunhild's side he and the Saxons passed through the mighty gates between files of prostrate chieftains; aye, the memory of the mob is very short. But a few days have passed since they were yelling as wildly for Ska the liberator—scout horns had passed since Ska sat enthroned, master of life and death, and the people bowed before his feet. Now—Turlogh glanced at the mangled corpse which lay deserted and forgotten before the silver gates. The shadow of a circling vulture fell across it. The clamor of the multitude filled Turlogh's ears and he smiled a bitter smile.

The great gates closed behind the three adventurers and Turlogh saw a broad white street stretching away in front of him. Other lower streets radiated from this one. The two warriors caught a jumbled and chaotic impression of great white stone buildings, shuddering each other; of sky-fitting towers and broad stair-fronted palaces. Turlogh knew there must be an ordered system by which the city was laid out, but to him all seemed a waste of stone and metal and polished wood, without time or reason. His halfling eyes sought the street again.

Far up the street extended a mass of humanity, from which rose a rhythmic thunder of sound. Thousands of naked, gayly plumed men and women knelt there, heading forward to touch the marble flags with their foreheads, then swaying back with an upward flinging of

their arms, all moving in perfect unison like the bending and rising of tall grass before the wind. And in time to their bowing they lifted a unisoned chant that sank and swelled in a frenzy of ecstasy. So her wayward people welcomed back the goddess Aale.

Just within the gates Bamsild stopped and there came to her the young chief who had first raised the shout of revolt upon the walls. He knelt and kissed her bare feet, saying: "Oh great queen and goddess, thou knowest Zomar was ever faithful to thee! Thou knowest how I fought for thee and barely escaped the altar of Gol-gotha for thy sake!"

"Thou hast indeed been faithful, Zomar," answered Bamsild in the stilted language required for such occasions, "nor shall thy fidelity go unrewarded. Henceforth thou art commander of my own bodyguard." Then in a lower voice she added: "Gather a band from your own retainers and from those who have espoused my cause all along, and bring them to the palace. I do not trust the people any more than I have tol."

Suddenly Athekstane, not understanding this conversation, broke in: "Where is the old one with the beard?"

Turlogh started and glanced around. He had almost forgotten the wizard. He had not seen him go—yet he was gone! Bamsild laughed roughly.

"He's stolen away to loved none trouble in the shadows. He and Celka vanished when Ska fell. He has secret ways of coming and going and none may stay him. Forget him for the time being, brood ye well—we shall have plenty of him soon!"

Now the chiefs brought a finely carved and highly ornamented palanquin carried by two strong slaves, and Bamsild stepped into this, saying to her companions: "They are fearful of touching you, but ask if you would be carried. I think it better that you walk, one on each side of me."

"That's blood!" roared Athekstane, shouldering the huge sword he had never sheathed, "I'm no infant! I'll split the skull of the man who asks to carry me!"

And so up the long white street went Bamsild, daughter of Ruse Throfin's son or the Glinor ye, goddess of the sea, queen of age-old Bal-Sagoth. Borne by two great slaves she went, with a white giant striding on each side with lined steel, and a concourse of chiefs following, while the multitude gave way to right and left, leaving a wide lane down which she passed. Golden trumpets sounded a fanfare of triumph, drums thundered, chants of worship echoed to the ringing shoes. Surely in this riot of glory, this barbaric pageant of splendor, the proud soul of the North-bean girl drank deep and grew drunken with imperial pride.

Athekstane's eyes glowed with simple delight at this flame of pagan

magnificence, but to the black-haired fighting man of the West, it seemed that even in the loudest clamor of triumph, the trumpet, the drum and the shouting faded away into the forgotten dust and silence of eternity. Kingdoms and empires pass away like mist from the sea, thought Turlogh; the people shout and triumph and even in the revelry of Belshazzar's feast, the Medes break the gates of Babylon. Even now the shadow of doom is over this city and the slow tides of oblivion lap the feet of this unheeding race. So in a strange mood Turlogh O'Brien strolled beside the palanquin, and it seemed to him that he and Atheltane walked in a dead city, through throngs of dim ghosts, chasing a ghost queen.

3. *The Fall of the Gods*

Night had fallen on the ancient city of Bal Sagoth. Turlogh, Atheltane and Branduhl sat alone in a room of the inner palace. The queen had reclined on a silken couch while the men sat on mahogany chairs, engaged in the stunts that slave-girls had moved them on golden dishes. The walls of this room, as of all the palace, were of marble, with golden scrollwork. The ceiling was of lapis-lazuli and the floor of silver-veined marble tiles. Heavy velvet hangings decorated the walls and silken cushions, richly made dresses and mahogany chairs and tables fitted the room in careless profusion.

"I would give much for a horn of ale, but this wine is not sour to the palate," said Atheltane, emptying a golden flagon with relish. "Branduhl, you have deceived us. You let us understand it would take hard fighting to win back your crown—yet I have struck but one blow and my sword is thirsty as Turlogh's as which has not drunk at all. We hammered on the gates and the people fell down and worshipped with no more ado. And until a little while ago, we but stood by your throne in the great palace room, while you spoke to the throngs that came and knocked their heads on the floor before you—by Thor, never have I heard such chattering and gibbering! My ears ring till now—what were they saying? And where is that old conspirer Gethan?"

"Your steel will drink deep yet, Saxon," answered the girl grimly, resting her chin on her hands and eyeing the warriors with deep moody eyes. "Had you gambled with cities and crowns as I have done, you would know that seizing a throne may be easier than keeping it. Our sudden appearance with the bird god's head, your killing of Ska, swept the people off their feet. As for the rest—I held audience in the palace as you saw, even if you did not understand, and the people who came in howling droves were assuring me of their unswerving loyalty—ha! I graciously pardoned them all, but I am no fool. When they have time to think, they will begin to grumble again. Gethan is lurking in the shadows somewhere, plotting evil to us all, you may be sure.

This city is honeycombed with secret corridors and subterranean passages of which only the priests know. Even I, who have traversed some of them when I was Gothan's puppet, know not where to look for the secret doors, since Gothan always led me through them blindfolded.

"Just now, I think I hold the upper hand. The people look on you with more awe than they regard me. They think your armor and helmets are part of your bodies and that you are invulnerable. Did you not note their timidly touching your mind as we passed through the crowd, and the amazement on their faces as they felt the iron of it?"

"For a people so wise in some ways they are very foolish in others," said Turlough. "Who are they and whence came they?"

"They are so old," answered Braumhild, "that their most ancient legends give no hint of their origin. Ages ago they were a part of a great empire which spread out over the many isles of this sea. But some of the islands sank and vanished with their cities and people. Then the red-skinned savages assailed them and isle after isle fell before them. At last only this island was left unconquered, and the people have become weaker and forgotten many ancient arts. For lack of ports to sail to, the galleys rotted by the wharves which themselves crumbled into decay. Not in the memory of man has any son of Bal-Sagoth sailed the seas. At irregular intervals the red people descend upon the Isle of the Gods, traversing the seas in their long war-canoes which bear grinning skulls on the prow. Not far away as a Viking would reckon a sea-voyage, but out of sight over the sea rim lie the islands inhabited by these red men who centuries ago slaughtered the folk who dwelt there. We have always beaten them off, they cannot scale the walls, but still they come and the fear of their raid is always hovering over the isle.

"But it is not them I fear; it is Gothan, who is at this moment either slipping like a stealthy serpent through his black tunnels or else howling abominations in one of his hidden chambers. In the caves deep in the hills to which his tunnels lead, he works fearful and unholy magic. His subjects are beasts—serpents, spiders, and great apes; and men—and captives and wretches of his own race. Deep in his grisly caverns he makes beasts of men and half-men of beasts, mingling bestial with human in ghastly creation. No man dares guess at the horrors that have spawned in the darkness or what shapes of terror and blasphemy have come into being during the ages Gothan has wrought his abominations; for he is not as other men, and has discovered the secret of life everlasting. He has at least brought into foul life one creature that even he fears, the gibbering, mowing, nameless Thing he keeps chained in the furthest cavern that no human foot save his has trod. He would loose it against me if he dared. . . .

"But it grows late and I would sleep. I will sleep in the room next to this, which has no other opening than this door. Not even a slave-girl will I keep with me, for I trust none of these people fully. You shall keep this room, and though the outer door is bolted, one had better watch while the other sleeps. Zomar and his guardmen patrol the corridors outside, but I shall feel safer with two men of my own blood between me and the rest of the city."

She rose, and with a strangely lingering glance at Turlogh, entered her chamber and closed the door behind her.

Athelstane stretched and yawned. "Well, Turlogh," said he lazily, "men's fortunes are unstable as the sea. Last night I was the picked swordman of a band of reavers and you a captive. This dawn we were lost outcasts springing at each other's throats. Now we are sword brothers and right-hand men to a queen. And you, I think, are destined to become a king."

"How so?"

"Why, have you not noticed the Orkney girl's eyes on you? Faith, there's more than friendship in her glances that rest on those black locks and that brown face of yours. I tell you——"

"Enough," Turlogh's voice was harsh as an old wound stung him. "Women in power are white-fanged wolves. It was the spite of a woman that——" He stopped.

"Well, well," returned Athelstane tolerantly, "there are more good women than had once, I know—it was the intrigues of a woman that made you an outcast. Well, we should be good comrades. I am an outlaw, too. If I should show my face in Wessex I would soon be looking down on the countryside from a stout oak limb."

"What drove you out on the Viking path? So far have the Saxons forgotten the ocean-ways that King Alfred was obliged to hire Frisian reavers to build and man his fleet when he fought the Danes."

Athelstane shrugged his mighty shoulders and began whetting his dirk.

"I had a yearning for the sea even when I was a shock-headed child in Wessex. I was still a youth when I killed a young eorl and fled the vengeance of his people. I found refuge in the Orkneys and the ways of the Vikings were more to my liking than the ways of my own blood. But I came back to fight against Canute, and when England submitted to his rule, he gave me command of his house-carles. That made the Danes jealous because of the honor given a Saxon who had fought against them, and the Saxons remembered I had left Wessex under a cloud once, and murmured that I was overly-well favored by the conquerors. Well, there was a Saxon thane and a Danish girl who one night at least assailed me with fiery words and I forgot myself and slew them both."

"So England—was—again—barred—to—me. I—took—the—Viking—path—again—"

Athelstan's words trailed off. His hands slid limply from his lap and the whetstone and disk dropped to the floor. His head fell forward on his broad chest and his eyes closed.

"To much woe," muttered Turlogh. "But let him slumber, I'll keep watch."

Yet even as he spoke, the Gael was aware of a strange lassitude stealing over him. He lay back in the broad chair. His eyes felt heavy and sleep veiled his brain despite himself. And as he lay there, a strange nightmare vision came to him. One of the heavy hangings on the wall opposite the door swayed violently and from behind it shook a fearful shape that crept slithering across the room. Turlogh watched it apathetically, aware that he was dreaming and at the same time wondering at the strangeness of the dream. The thing was grotesquely like a crooked grunted man in shape, but its face was bestial. It bared yellow fangs as it lurched silently toward him, and from under pent-house brows small reddened eyes gleamed demoniacally. Yet there was something of the human in its countenance, it was neither ape nor man, but an unnatural creature horribly compounded of both.

Now the fiend apparition halted before him, and as the grunted fingers clutched his throat, Turlogh was suddenly and fearfully aware that this was no dream but a fiendish reality. With a hoist of desperate effort he broke the uneven chains that held him and hurled himself from the chair. The grasping fingers missed his throat, but quick as he was, he could not elude the swift lunge of those hairy arms, and the next moment he was tumbling about the floor in a death grip with the monster, whose sinews felt like phant steel.

That fearful battle was fought in silence save for the hissing of hard drawn breath. Turlogh's left forearm was thrust under the apish clan, holding back the grisly fangs from his throat, about which the monster's fingers had locked. Athelstan still slept in his chair, head fallen forward. Turlogh tried to call to him, but those throttling hands had shut off his voice. "Now I'm choking out his life. The room swam in a red haze before his detached eyes. His right hand, clenching into an iron mallet, battered desperately at the fearful face bent toward his, the beast-like teeth shattered under his blows and blood splattered, but still the red eyes glared and the taloned fingers sank deeper and deeper until a ringing in Turlogh's ears knelted his soul's departure.

Even as he sank into semi-unconsciousness, his falling head struck something his unaltered fighting-brain recognized as the disk Athelstan had dropped on the floor. Blindly, with a dying gesture, Turlogh struck and felt the fingers loosen suddenly. Feeling the return of life and power, he heaved up and over, with his axant beneath

him. Through red mists that slowly lightened, Turlogh Dabh saw the ape-man, now crimsoned, writhing beneath him, and he drove the dirk home until the dumb horror lay still with wide staring eyes.

The Gael staggered to his feet, dizzy and panting, trembling in every limb. He drew in great gulps of air and his giddiness slowly cleared. Blood trickled plentifully from the wounds in his throat. He noted with amazement that the Saxon still slumbered. And suddenly he began to feel again the tides of unnatural weariness and lassitude that had rendered him helpless before. Picking up his ax, he shook off the feeling with difficulty and stepped toward the curtain from behind which the ape-man had come. Like an invisible wave a subtle-power emanating from those hangings struck him, and with weighted limbs he forced his way across the room. Now he stood before the curtain and felt the power of a terrific evil will beating upon his own, menacing his very soul, threatening to enslave him, brain and body. Twice he raised his hand and twice it dropped limply to his side. Now for the third time he made a mighty effort and tore the hangings bodily from the wall. For a flashing instant he caught a glimpse of a hideous, half-naked figure in a mantle of parrot-feathers and a head-gear of waving plumes. Then as he felt the full hypnotic blast of those blazing eyes, he closed his own eyes and struck blind. He felt his ax sink deep; then he opened his eyes and gazed at the silent figure which lay at his feet, cleft head in a widening crimson pool.

And now Athelstane suddenly heaved erect, eyes flaring bewilderedly, stared out. "What——?" he stammered, glaring wildly. "Turlogh, what is this? some's happened? This's blood! That is a priest there, but what is this dead thing?"

"One of the devils of this foul city," answered Turlogh, wrenching his ax free. "I think Gotham has failed again. This one stood behind the hangings and bewitched us marvares. He put the spell of sleep on us——"

"Aye, I slept," the Saxon nodded dazedly. "But how came they here——"

"There must be a secret door behind these hangings, though I cannot find it——"

"Hark!" From the room where the queen slept there came a vague scuffling sound, that in its very faintness seemed fraught with grisly possibilities.

"Brushhild!" Turlogh shouted. A strangled gasp answered him. He thrust against the door. It was locked. As he heaved up his ax to hew it open, Athelstane brushed him aside and hurled his full weight against it. The panels crashed and through their ruins Athelstane plunged into the room. A roar burst from his lips. Over the Saxon's shoulder Turlogh saw a vision of delirium. Brushhild, queen of Bal-Sagoth, writhed helpless in mid-air, gripped by the black shadow of

a nightmare. Then as the great black shape turned cold flaming eyes on them Turlogh saw it was a living creature. It stood, man-like, upon two tree-like legs, but its outline and face were not of a man, beast or devil. This, Turlogh felt, was the horror that even Cothan had hesitated to loose upon his foes, the archfiend that the demonic priest had brought into life in his hidden caves of horror. What ghastly knowledge had been necessary, what hideous blending of human and bestial things with nameless shapes from outer voids of darkness?

Held like a babe in arms Brunhild wailed, eyes flashing with horror, and as the Thing took a misshapen hand from her white throat to defend itself, a scream of heart-shaking light burst from her pale lips. Athelstane, first in the room, was ahead of the Carl. The black shape loomed over the great Saxon, dashing and overshadowing him, but Athelstane, gripping the hilt with both hands, leaped upward. The great sword sank over half its length into the black body and came out crimson as the monster reeled back. A hellish pandemonium of sound burst forth, and the echoes of that hideous yell thundered through the palace and deafened the hearers. Turlogh was springing in, as high, when the fiend dropped the girl and fled reeling across the room, vanishing in a dark opening that now gaped in the wall. Athelstane, clean berserk, plunged after it.

Turlogh made to follow, but Brunhild, reeling up, threw her white arms around him in a grip even he could hardly break. "No!" she screamed, eyes ablaze with terror, "do not follow them into that fearful corridor! It must lead to Hell itself! The Saxons will never return! Let you not share his fate!"

"Loose me, woman!" roared Turlogh in a frenzy, striving to disengage himself without hurting her. "My comrade may be fighting for his life!"

"Wait till I summon the guard!" she cried, but Turlogh flung her from him, and as he sprang through the secret doorway, Brunhild smote on the jade gong until the palace re-echoed. A loud pounding began in the corridor and Zinnia's voice shouted: "Oh queen, are you in peril? Shall we burst the door?"

"Hasten!" she screamed, as she rushed to the outer door and flung it open.

Turlogh, leaping recklessly into the corridor, roared along in darkness for a few moments, hearing ahead of him the agonized belabouring of the wounded monster and the deep fierce shouts of the Viking. Then these noises faded away in the distance as he came into a narrow passageway faintly lighted with torches stuck into niches. Face down on the floor lay a brown man, clad in gay leathers, his skull crushed like an egg-shell.

How long Turlogh O'Brien followed the dizzy windings of the shadowy corridor he never knew. Other smaller passages led off to

each side but he kept to the main corridor. At last he passed under an arched doorway and came out into a strange vast room.

Somber massive columns upheld a shadowy ceiling so high it seemed like a brooding cloud arched against a midnight sky. Turlogh saw that he was in a temple. Behind a black red-stained stone altar loomed a mighty form, sinister and abominable. The god Col-goroth! Surely it must be he. But Turlogh spared only a single glance for the colossal figure that brooded there in the shadows. Before him was a strange tabernacle. Athelstane leaned on his great sword and gazed at the two shapen which sprawled in a red welter at his feet. Whatever foul magic had brought the Black Thing into life, it had taken but a thrust of English steel to hurl it back into the limbo whence it came. The monster lay half across its last victim—a gaunt white-headed man whose eyes were starkly evil, even in death.

"Gothan!" ejaculated the startled Gael.

"Aye, the priest—I was close behind this troll or whatever it is, all the way along the corridor, but for all its size it fled like a dove. Once one in a feather mantle tried to halt it, and it smashed his skull and pained not an instant. At last we burst into this temple, I close upon the monster's back with my sword raised for the death-cut. But Thoe's blood! When it saw the old one standing by that altar, it gave one fearful howl and tore him to pieces and died stuff, all in an instant, before I could reach it and strike."

Turlogh gazed at the huge formless thing. Looking directly at it, he could form no estimate of its nature. He got only a chaotic impression of great size and inhuman evil. Now it lay like a vast shadow blotched out on the marble floor. Sooty black wings beating from motionless galls, had hovered over its bulk, and the grisly souls of nameless demons had gone into its being.

And now Bumbald rushed from the dark corridor with Zomar and the pendantsmen. And from outer doors and secret nooks came others silently—warriors, and priests in feathered mantles, until a great throng stood in the Temple of Darkness.

A fierce cry broke from the queen as she saw what had happened. Her eyes blazed terribly and she was gripped by a strange madness.

"At last!" she screamed, spurning the corpse of her arch-foe with her heel, "at last I am true mistress of Bal-Sagoth! The secrets of the hidden ways are mine now, and old Gothan's beard is dabbled in his own blood!"

She flung her arms high in fearful triumph, and ran toward the grim idol, screaming exultant insults like a mad-woman. And at that instant the temple rocked! The colossal image swayed outward, and then pitched suddenly forward as a tall tower falls. Turlogh shouted and leaped forward, but even as he did, with a thunder like the booming of a world, the god Col-goroth crashed down upon the demand

woman, who stood frozen. The mighty fringe splintered into a thousand great fragments, blotting from the sight of men for ever Brunhild, daughter of Rane Thorfin's son, queen of Bal-Sagoth. From under the ruins there oozed a wide crimson stream.

Warriors and priests stood frozen, dazed by the crash of that fall, stunned by the weird catastrophe. An icy hand touched Turlogh's spine. Had that vast bulk been thrust over by the hand of a dead man? As it had rushed downward it had seemed to the Gael that the inhuman features had for an instant taken on the likeness of the dead Gollum!

Now at all stood speechless, the neolyte Gelfa saw and seized his opportunity.

"Goll-growth has spoken!" he screamed. "He has crushed the false goddess! She was but a wicked sorceress! And these strangers, too, are mortal! See—he bleeds!"

The priest's finger stabbed at the dried blood on Turlogh's throat and a wild roar went up from the throng. Dazed and bewildered by the swiftness and magnitude of the late events, they were like crazed wolves, ready to wipe out doubts and fear in a burst of bloodshed. Gelfa bounded at Turlogh, hatchet flashing, and a knife in the hand of a satellite licked into Zornar's back. Turlogh had not understood the shout, but he realised the air was true with danger for Athelstane and himself. He met the leaping Gelfa with a stroke that shewed through the waving phurs and the skull beneath, then half a dozen knees bucked on his buckler and a rush of bodies swept him back against a great pile. Then Athelstane, slow of thought, who had stood gaping for the flashing second it had taken him to transpire, awoke in a blast of awesome fury. With a deafening roar he swung his heavy sword in a mighty arc. The whirling blade whipped off a head, cleared through a torso and sank deep into a spinal column. The three corpses fell across each other and even in the madness of the strife, men cried out at the marvel of that single stroke.

But like a brown, blind tide of fury the maddened people of Bal-Sagoth rolled on their foes. The guardians of the dead queen, trapped in the press, died to a man without a chance to strike a blow. But the overthrow of the two white warriors was no such easy task. Back to back they smashed and smote; Athelstane's sword was a thunderbolt of death; Turlogh's ax was lightning. Hedged close by a sea of snarling brown faces and flashing steel, they hacked their way slowly toward a doorway. The very mass of the attackers hindered the warriors of Bal-Sagoth, for they had no space to guide their strokes, while the weapons of the seafarers kept a bloody ring clear in front of them.

Hurping a ghastly row of corpses as they went, the comrades slowly cut their way through the snarling press. The Temple of

Shadows, witness of many a bloody deed, was flooded with gore spilled like a red sacrifice to her broken gods. The heavy weapons of the white fighters wrought fearful havoc among their naked, lighter-berbed foes, while their armor guarded their own lives. But their arms, legs and faces were cut and gashed by the frantically flying steel and it seemed the sheer number of their foes would overwhelm them ere they could reach the door.

Then they had reached it, and made desperate play until the brown warriors, no longer able to come upon them from all sides, drew back for a breathing-space, leaving a torn red heap before the threshold. And in that instant the two sprang back into the corridor and seizing the great hazy door, slammed it in the very faces of the warriors who leaped howling to prevent it. Athelstane, heaving his mighty legs, held it against their combined efforts until Turlogh had time to find and slip the bolt.

"Thief" gasped the Saxon, shaking the blood in a red shower from his face. "This is close play! What now, Turlogh?"

"Down the corridor, quick!" snapped the Gael, "before they come on us from this way and trap us like rats against this door. By Satan, the whole city must be roused! Back to that rising!"

In truth, as they raced down the shadowed corridor, it seemed to them that all Bal-Sagoth had burst into rebellion and civil war. From all sides came the clashing of steel, the shouts of men, and the screams of women, overshadowed by a hideous howling. A hazy glow became apparent down the corridor and then even as Turlogh, in the lead, rounded a corner and came out into an open courtyard, a vague figure leaped at him and a heavy weapon fell with unexpected force on his shield, almost felling him. But even as he staggered he struck back and the upper-spike on his ax sank under the heart of his attacker, who fell at his feet. In the glare that illumined all, Turlogh saw his victim differed from the brown warriors he had been fighting. This man was naked, powerfully muscled and of a copperish red rather than brown. The heavy animal-like jaw, the slanting low forehead showed some of the intelligence and refinement of the brown people, but only a brute ferocity. A heavy warclub, rudely carved, lay beside him.

"By Thor!" exclaimed Athelstane, "the city burns!"

Turlogh looked up. They were standing on a sort of raised courtyard from which broad steps led down into the streets and from this vantage-point they had a plain view of the terrific end of Bal-Sagoth. Flames leaped madly higher and higher, paler the moon, and in the red glare pigmy figures ran to and fro, falling and dying like puppets dancing to the tune of the Black Gods. Through the roar of the flames and the crashing of falling walls cut screams of death and shrieks of ghastly triumph. The city was swarming with naked, copper-skinned

devils who burned and ravished and butchered in one red carnival of madness.

The red men of the isle! By the thousands they had descended on the Isle of the Gods in the night, and whether stealth or treachery let them through the walls, the comrades never knew, but now they raved through the corpse-strewn streets, glutting their blood-hunt in holocaust and massacre wholesale. Not all the gashed forms that lay in the crimson-running streets were brown; the people of the doomed city fought with desperate courage but, outnumbered and caught off guard, their courage was futile. The red men were like blood-hungry tigers.

"What ho, Turlogh!" shouted Atheltane, beard a-bristle, eyes alight as the madness of the scene fired a like passion in his own fierce soul. "The world ends! Let us into the thick of it and glut our steel before we die! Who shall we strike for—the red or the brown?"

"Steady!" snapped the Gael. "Either people would cut our throats. We must hack our way through to the gates, and the Devil take them all. We have no friends here. This way—down these stairs. Across the roofs in yonder direction I see the arch of a gate."

The comrades sprang down the stairs, gained the narrow street below and ran swiftly in the way Turlogh indicated. About them washed a red inundation of slaughter. A thick smoke veiled all now, and as the stark chaotic groups merged, writhed and scattered, littering the shattered flags with gory shapes. It was like a nightmare in which demonic figures leaped and capered, looming suddenly in the fire-shot mist, vanishing as suddenly. The flames from each side of the streets shouldered each other, singeing the hair of the warriors as they ran. Roofs fell in with an awesome thunder and walls crashing into ruin filled the air with flying death. Men struck blindly from the smoke and the scoundrels cut them down and never knew whether their skins were brown or red.

Now a new note rose in the cataclysmic horror. Blinded by the smoke, confused by the winding streets, the red men were trapped in the snare of their own making. Fire is impartial, it can burn the lighter, as well as the intended victim; and a falling wall is blind. The red men abandoned their prey and ran howling to and fro like beasts, seeking escape, many, finding this futile, turned back as a lost unreasoning storm of madness as a blinded tiger turns, and made their last moments of life a crimson burst of slaughter.

Turlogh, with the unerring sense of direction that comes to men who live the life of the wolf, ran toward the point where he knew an outer gate to be; yet in the windings of the streets and the screen of smoke, doubt assailed him. From the flame-shot mark in front of him a fearful scream rang out. A naked girl reeled blindly into view and fell at Turlogh's feet, blood gushing from her mutilated breast. A

howling, red-stained devil, close on her heels, jerked back her head and cut her throat a fraction of a second before Turlogh's ax ripped the head from its shoulders and spun it grinning into the street. And at that second a sudden wind shifted the writhing smoke and the comrades saw the open gateway ahead of them, assuam with red warriors. A fierce shout, a blasting rush, a mad instant of volcanic ferocity that littered the gateway with corpses, and they were through and racing down the slopes toward the distant forest and the beach beyond. Before them the sky was reddening for dawn, behind them rose the soul-shaking tumult of the doomed city.

Like hunted things they fled, seeking brief shelters among the many groves from time to time, to avoid groups of savages who ran toward the city. The whole island seemed to be swarming with them, the chiefs must have drawn on all the isles within hundreds of miles for a raid of such magnitude. And at last the comrades reached the strip of forest, and breathed deeply as they came to the beach and found it abandoned save for a number of long skull-decorated war canoes.

Athelstane sat down and gasped for breath. "Thor's blood! What now? What may we do but hide in these woods until those red devils hunt us out?"

"Help me launch this boat," snapped Turlogh. "We'll take our chance on the open main."

"Ho!" Athelstane leaped erect, pointing. "Thor's blood, a ship!"

The sun was just up, gleaming like a great golden coin on the sea-rim. And hunched in the sun swam a tall, high-pooped craft. The comrades leaped into the nearest canoe, shoved off and rowed like mad, shouting and waving their oars to attract the attention of the crew. Powerful muscles drove the long-skin craft along at an incredible clip, and it was not long before the ship stood about and allowed them to come alongside. Dark-faced men, clad in mail, looked over the rail.

"Spaniards," muttered Athelstane. "If they recognize me, I had better stayed on the island!"

But he clambered up the chain without hesitation, and the two wanderers fronted the lean somber-faced man whose armor was that of a knight of Asturias. He spoke to them in Spanish and Turlogh answered him, for the Gael, like many of his race, was a natural linguist and had wandered far and spoken many tongues. In a few words the Dalmanian told their story and explained the great pillar of smoke which now rolled upward in the morning air from theisle.

"Tell him there is a king's ransom for the taking," put in Athelstane. "Tell him of the silver gates, Turlogh."

But when the Gael spoke of the vast loot in the doomed city, the commander shook his head.

"Good air, we have no time to secure it, nor men to waste in the

taking. Those red fiends you describe would hardly give up anything—through useless to them—without a fierce battle and neither my time nor my force is mine. I am Don Boderigo del Cortez of Castile and this ship, the *Gray Friar*, is one of a fleet that sailed to harry the Moorish Corsairs. Some days ago we were separated from the rest of the fleet in a sea skirmish and the tempest blew us far off our course. We are even now heaving back to rejoin the fleet if we can find it, if not, to harry the infidel as well as we may. We serve God and the king and we cannot halt for mere dross as you suggest. But you are welcome aboard this ship and we have need of such fighting men as you appear to be. You will not regret it, should you wish to join us and strike a blow for Christendom against the Moslems."

In the narrow-beldged nose and deep dark eyes, as in the lean ascetic face, Turlogh read the fanatic, the stainless cavalier, the knight errant. He spoke to Athelstane: "This man is mad, but there are good blows to be struck and strange hands to see, anyway, we have no other choice."

"One place is as good as another to masterless men and wanderers," quoth the huge Saxon. "Tell him we will follow him to Hell and ungue the tail of the Devil if there be any chance of lost."

4. Empire

Turlogh and Athelstane leaned on the rail, gazing back at the swiftly receding island of the Gods, from which rose a pillar of smoke, laden with the ghosts of a thousand centuries and the shadows and mysteries of forgotten empire, and Athelstane cursed as only a Saxon can.

"A king's ransom—and after all that blood-letting—no lost!"

Turlogh shook his head. "We have seen an ancient kingdom fall—we have seen the last remnant of the world's oldest empire sink into flames and the abyss of oblivion, and barbarism rear its brute head above the ruins. So pass the glory and the splendor and the imperial purple—in red flames and yellow smoke."

"But not one bit of plunder——" persisted the Viking.

Again Turlogh shook his head. "I brought away with me the rarest gem upon the island—something for which men and women have died and the gutters run with blood."

He drew from his girdle a small object—a curiously carved symbol of *jule*.

"The emblem of kingship" exclaimed Athelstane.

"Aye—as Branhild struggled with me to keep me from following you into the corridor, this thing caught in my mail and was torn from the golden chain that held it."

"He who bears it is king of Bal-Sagoth," murmured the mighty Saxon. "As I predicted, Turlogh, you *are* a king!"

Turlogh laughed with bitter mirth and pointed to the great billowing column of smoke which floated in the sky away on the sea-wind.

"Aye—a kingdom of the dead—an empire of ghosts and smoke. I am Aod-Righ of a phantom city—I am King Turlogh of Bal-Sagoth and my kingdom is fading in the morning sky. And therein it is like all other empires in the world—dreams and ghosts and smoke."

The Chain of Aforgaman

by Clark Ashton Smith

It is the peculiar genius of Clark Ashton Smith to tie up the world of fantasy with the world of modern man. Himself chained to this planet by the bonds of flesh, his poetic mind constantly dwells on the fathomless wonders of the stars, and on the infinite corridors of time. Your editor considers his prime to be the most talented in fantastic imagery of any writer now alive, with the possible exception of Lord Dunsany and not excepting James Branch Cabell. In this selection of Smith's work, the tie between the world of man and the boundless infinity of the universe is brought out in breath-taking vision.

IT IS indeed strange that John Milwarp and his writings should have fallen so speedily into semi-oblivion. His books, treating of Oriental life in a somewhat flowery, romantic style, were popular a few months ago. But now, in spite of their range and penetration, their pervasive verbal mystery, they are seldom mentioned, and they seem to have vanished unaccountably from the shelves of bookstores and libraries.

Even the mystery of Milwarp's death, baffling to both law and science, has evoked but a passing interest, an excitement quickly lulled and forgotten.

I was well acquainted with Milwarp over a term of years. But my recollection of the man is becoming strangely blurred, like an image in a misted mirror. His dark, half-sha-p personality, his preoccupation with the occult, his immense knowledge of Eastern life and lore, are things I remember with such effort and vagueness as attend the recovery of a dream. Sometimes I almost doubt that he ever existed. It is as if the man, and all that pertains to him, were being erased from human record by some mysterious acceleration of the common process of obliteration.

In his will, he appointed me his executor. I have vainly tried to interest publishers in the novel he left among his papers: a novel surely not inferior to anything he ever wrote. They say that his vogue has passed. Now I am publishing the contents of the diary kept by Milwarp for a period preceding his demise.

Perhaps, for the open-minded, this diary will explain the enigma of his death. It would seem that the circumstances of that death are

virtually forgotten, and I repeat them here as part of my endeavor to revive and perpetuate Milwarp's memory.

Milwarp had returned to his home in San Francisco after a long sojourn in Indo-China. We who knew him gathered that he had gone into places seldom visited by Occidentals. At the time of his demise he had just finished correcting the typescript of a novel which dealt with the more romantic and mysterious aspects of Burma.

On the morning of April 2, 1933, his housekeeper, a middle-aged woman, was startled by a glare of brilliant light which issued from the half-open door of Milwarp's study. It was as if the whole room were in flames. Horrified, the woman hastened to investigate. Entering the study, she saw her master sitting in an armchair at the table, wearing the rich, somber robes of Chinese brocade which he affected as a dressing gown. He sat stiffly erect, a pen clutched unmoving in his fingers on the open pages of a manuscript volume. About him, in a sort of nimbus, glowed and flickered the strange light, and her only thought was that his garments were on fire.

She ran toward him, crying out a warning. At that moment the weird nimbus brightened intolerably, and the sun early daytime, the electric bulbs that still burned to attest the night's labor, were alike blotted out. It seemed to the housekeeper that something had gone wrong with the room itself, for the walls and table vanished, and a great, luminous gulf opened before her; and on the verge of the gulf, in a seat that was not his cushioned armchair but a huge and rough-hewn seat of stone, she beheld her master stark and rigid. His heavy brocaded robes were gone, and about him, from head to foot, were binding coils of pure white fire, in the form of linked chains. She could not endure the brilliance of the chains and, covering back, she shuttled her eyes with her hands. When she dared to look again, the weird glowing had faded, the room was as usual, and Milwarp's motionless figure was seated at the table in the posture of writing.

Shaken and terrified as she was, the woman found courage to approach her master. A hideous smell of burnt flesh arose from beneath his garments, which were wholly intact and without visible trace of fire. He was dead, his fingers clenched on the pen and his features frozen in a stare of totanic agony. His neck and wrists were completely encircled by felfightful burns that had charred them deeply. The coroner, in his examination, found that these burns, preserving an outline as of heavy links, were extended in long unbroken spirals around the arms and legs and torso. The burning was apparently the cause of Milwarp's death; it was as if iron chains, heated to incandescence, had been wrapped about him.

Small credit was given to the housekeeper's story of what she had seen. No one, however, could suggest an acceptable explanation of

the lacuna mystery. There was, at the time, much stinkier discussion, but, as I have hinted, people soon turned to other matters. The efforts made to solve the riddle were somewhat perfunctory. Chemists tried to determine the nature of a queer drug, in the form of a gray powder with pearly granules, to which use Milwarp had become addicted. But their tests merely revealed the presence of an alkaloid whose source and attributes were obscure to Western science.

Day by day, the whole incredible business lapsed from public attention, and those who had known Milwarp began to display the forgetfulness that was no less inescapable than his weird doom. The housekeeper, who had held steadfastly in the beginning to her story, came at length to share the common delirium. Her account, with repetition, became vague and contradictory; detail by detail, she seemed to forget the abnormal circumstances that she had witnessed with overwhelming horror.

The manuscript volume, in which Milwarp had apparently been writing at the time of death, was given into my charge with his other papers. It proved to be a diary, its last entry breaking off abruptly. Since reading the diary, I have hastened to transcribe it in my own hand, because, for some mysterious reason, the ink of the original is already fading and has become almost illegible in places.

The reader will note certain lacunae, due to passages written in an alphabet which neither I nor any scholar of my acquaintance can transcribe. These passages seem to form an integral part of the narrative, and they occur mainly toward the end, as if the writer had turned more and more to a language remembered from his ancient avatar. To the same mental reversion one must attribute the singular dating, in which Milwarp, still employing English script, appears to pass from our contemporary notation to that of some prehistoric world.

I give hereunder the entire diary, which begins with an undated footnote.

This book, unless I have been misinformed concerning the qualities of the drug sources, will be the record of my former life in a lost cycle. I have had the drug in my possession for seven months, but fear has prevented me from using it. Now, by certain tokens, I perceive that the longing for knowledge will soon overcome the fear.

Ever since my earliest childhood I have been troubled by intimations, dim, unplaceable, that seemed to argue a forgotten existence. These intimations portended of the nature of feelings rather than ideas or images: they were like the wreaths of dead memories. In the background of my mind there has lurked a sentiment of lossless, melancholy desire for some nameless beauty long perished out of time. And, coincidentally, I have been haunted by an equally formless dread, an apprehension as of some bygone but still imminent doom.

Such feelings have persisted, undiminished, throughout my youth and maturity, but nowhere have I found any clue to their causation. My travels in the mystic Orient, my delvings into occultism, have merely convinced me that these shadowy intuitions pertain to some transaction buried under the wreck of remotest cycles.

Many times in my wanderings through Buddhistic lands, I had heard of the drug *soucone*, which is believed to restore, even for the umbratate, the memory of other lives. And at last, after many vain efforts, I managed to procure a supply of the drug. The manner in which I obtained it is a tale sufficiently remarkable in itself, but of no special relevance here. So far—perhaps because of that apprehension which I have hinted—I have not dared to use the drug.

March 9th, 1911. This morning I took *soucone* for the first time, dissolving the proper amount in pure distilled water as I had been instructed to do. Afterward I leaned back easily in my chair, breathing with a slow, regular rhythm. I had no preconceived idea of the sensation that would ensue the drug's initial effect, since there were said to vary prodigiously with the temperament of the user, but I composed myself to await them with tranquillity, after formulating clearly in my mind the purpose of the experiment.

For a while there was no change in my awareness. I noticed a slight quickening of the pulse, and modulated my breathing in conformity with this. Then, by slow degrees, I experienced a sharpening of visual perception. The Chinese rugs on the floor, the backs of the searied volumes in my bookshelves, the very wood of chairs, table and shelves, began to exhibit new and unimagined colors. At the same time there were envious alterations of outline, every object seeming to extend itself in a hitherto unexpressed fashion. Following this, my surroundings became semi-transparent, like molded shapes of mist. I found that I could see through the marbled cover the illustrations in a volume of John Martin's edition of *Paradise Lost*, which lay before me on the table.

All this, I knew, was a mere extension of ordinary physical vision. It was only a prelude to those apperceptions of occult realms which I sought through *soucone*. Fixing my mind once more on the goal of the experiment, I became aware that the misty walls had vanished like a dream scene. About me, like reflections in rippled water, dim scenarios unrolled and shifted, erasing one another from instant to instant. I seemed to hear a vague but ever-present sound, more musical than the murmurs of air, water or fire, which was a property of the unknown element that environed me.

With a sense of troublous familiarity, I beheld the blurred unstable pictures which flowed past me upon this never-resting medium. Orient temples, flashing with sun-struck bronze and gold, the stup,

crowded gables and spires of medieval cities, tropic and northern forests; the costumes and physiognomies of the Levant, of Persia, of old Rome and Carthage, went by like blown, flying images. Each succeeding tableau belonged to a more ancient period than the one before it—and I knew that each was a scene from some former existence of my own.

Still tethered, as it were, to my present self, I reviewed these visible memories, which took on tri-dimensional depth and clarity. I saw myself as warrior and troubadour, as noble and merchant and mendicant. I trembled with dead fears, I thrilled with lost hopes and raptures, and was drawn by ties that death and Lethé had broken. Yet never did I fully identify myself with those other avatars: for I knew well that the memory I sought pertained to some incarnation of older epochs.

Still the phantasmagoria streamed on, and I turned giddy with vertigo unfeeling before the vastness and diuturnity of the cycles of being. It seemed that I, the watcher, was lost in a gray land where the homeless ghosts of all dead ages went fleeing from oblivion to oblivion.

The walls of Nineveh, the columns and towers of unnamed cities, rise before me and were swept away. I saw the luminous plains that are now the Gobi Desert. The sea-lost capitals of Atlantis were drawn to the light in unquenched glory. I gazed on hush and cloudy scenes from the first continents of Earth. Bileedly I relived the beginnings of terrestrial man—and knew that the secret I would learn was ancient even then.

My visions faded into black voidness—and yet, in that void, through fathomless eons, it seemed that I existed still like a blind atom in the space between the worlds. About me was the darkness and repose of that night which antedated the Earth's creation. Time flowed backward with the silence of dreamless sleep. . . .

The illumination, when it came, was instant and complete. I stood in the full, fervid blaze of day amid royally towering blossoms in a deep garden, beyond whose lofty, vine-clad walls I heard the confused humming of the great city called Kalsod. Above me, at their vernal zenith, were the four small suns that illumined the planet Heston. Jewel-colored insects fluttered about me, lighting without fear on the rich habiliments of gold and black, embroidered with astronomic symbols, in which I was attired. Beside me was a dual-shaped altar of zoned agate, carved with the same symbols, which were those of the dreadful omnipotent time-god, Afargonnan, whom I served as a priest.

I had not even the slightest memory of myself as John Midwarp, and the long pageant of my terrestrial lives was as something that had never been—or was yet to be. Sorrow and desolation choked my heart as ashes fill some urn consecrated to the dead, and all the hues and perfumes of the garden about me were redolent only of the bitterness

of death. Caring darkly upon the altar, I muttered blasphemy against Aforgomon who, in his inexorable course, had taken away my beloved and had sent no solace for my grief. Separately I cursed the signs upon the altar: the stars, the worlds, the sun, the moon, that acted and fulfilled the processes of time. Beltharis, my betrothed, had died at the end of the previous autumn: and yet, with terrible maledictions, I cursed the stars and planets presiding over that season.

I became aware that a shadow had fallen beside my own on the altar, and knew that the dark sage and sorcerer Atmus had obeyed my summons. Fearfully but not without hope I turned toward him, noting first of all that he bore under his sun a heavy, sinister-looking volume with covers of black steel and hinges of adamant. Only when I had made sure of this did I lift my eyes to his face, which was little less somber and forbidding than the time he died.

"Creeting, O Calaga," he said harshly. "I have come against my own will and judgment. The book that you request is in this volume; and since you saved me in former years from the inquisitorial wrath of the time-gods' priests, I cannot refuse to share it with you. But understand well that even I, who have called upon names that are dreadful to utter, and have evoked forbidden provinces, shall never dare to assist you in this conjuration. Gladly would I help you to hold converse with the shadow of Beltharis, or to animate her still unwithered body and draw it forth from the tomb. But that which you propose is another matter. You alone must perform the ordained rites, must speak the necessary words: for the consequences of this thing will be direer than you deem."

"I care not for the consequences," I replied eagerly. "if it be possible to bring back the last hours which I shared with Beltharis. Think you that I could content myself with her shadow, wandering thurdy back from the Borderland? Or that I could take pleasure in the fair clay that the breath of necromancy has troubled and has made to arise and walk without mind or will? Nay, the Beltharis I would summon is the one whom the shadow of death has never yet fallen!"

It seemed that Atmus, the master of dreadful arts, the vassal of unbenign powers, recoiled and blushed before my vehement declaration.

"Betrink you," he said with minatory sternness, "that this thing will constitute a herack of the sacred logic of time and a blasphemy against Aforgomon, god of the minutes and the cycles. Moreover, there is little to be gained: for not in its entirety may you bring back the season of your love, but only one single hour, torn with aduante violence from its rightful period in time. . . . Behave, I adjure you, and content yourself with a lesser sorcery."

"Give me the book," I demanded. "My service to Aforgomon is forfeit. With due reverence and devotion I have worshipped the time-

god, and have done in his honor the rites ordained from eternity, and for all this the god has betrayed me."

Then, in that high-climbing, luxuriant garden beneath the four suns, Atrax opened the adamantine clasp of the steel-bound volume, and, turning to a certain page, he laid the book reluctantly in my hands. The page, like its fellows, was of some unlovely parchment streaked with musty discolorations and blackening at the margin with sheer antiquity, but upon it shone unequivocally the dread characters a palmed archmage had written with an ink bright as the new-shed ichor of demons. Above this page I bent in my madness, coming it over and over till I was dazed by the fiery runes, and, shutting my eyes, I saw them burn on a red darkness, still legible, and writhing like hellish worms.

Hollowly, like the sound of a far bell I heard the voice of Atrax: "You have learned, O Calopa, the unutterable name of that One whose assistance can alone restore the fled hours. And you have learned the negation that will rouse that hidden power, and the sacrifice needed for its propitiation. Knowing these things, is your heart still strong and your purpose firm?"

The name I had read in the wizard volume was that of the chief cosmic power antagonistic to Alogoson, the incantation and the required offering were those of a foul demoteletry. Nevertheless, I did not hesitate, but gave resolute affirmative answer to the sombre query of Atrax.

Perceiving that I was affable, he bowed his head, trying no more to dissuade me. Then, as the time-tuned volume had bade me do, I defiled the altar of Alogoson, blotting certain of its pious symbols with dust and spittle. While Atrax looked on in silence, I wounded my right arm to its deepest vein in the sharp-tipped grooves of the dust and, letting the blood drip from zone to zone, from orb to orb of the given agate, I made unlawful sacrifice, and intoned aloud, in the name of the Looking Glass, Xesmoth, an abominable ritual composed by a backward repetition and piling of litanies sacred to the time-god.

Even as I chanted the incantation, it seemed that webs of shadow were woven faintly about the suns, and the ground shook a little, as if colossal demons tried the world's rim, striding straggleously from abysses beyond. The garden walls and trees wavered like a wind-blown reflection in a pool; and I grew faint with the loss of that life-blood I had poured out in demoteletrous offering. Then, in my flesh and in my brain, I felt the intolerable racking of a vibration like the long drawn shock of cities riven by earthquakes, and seats crumbling before some chaotic sea, and my flesh was torn and harrowed, and my brain shuddered with the terrible diacreds sweeping through me from deep to deep.

I faltered, and confusion gnawed at my inmost being. Dimly I heard the prompting of Atmou, and dinner still was the sound of my own voice that made answer to Xenamoth, naming the impious ceremony which was to be effected only through its power. Madly I implored from Xenamoth, in despite of time and its ordered seasons, one hour of that bygone autumn which I had shared with Belthoris; and imploring this, I named no special hour for all, in memory, had seemed of an equal joy and gladness.

As the words ceased upon my lips, I thought that darkness flattered in the air like a great wing, and the four suns went out, and my heart was stilled as if in death. Then the light returned, falling obliquely from suns mellow with full-tided autumn; and nowhere beside me was there any shadow of Atmou; and the altar of zoned agate was bloodless and undefiled. I, the lover of Belthoris, writing not of the doom and sorrow to come, stood happily with my beloved before the altar, and saw her young hands crown its ancient dial with the flowers we had plucked from the garden.

Dreadful beyond all fathoming are the mysteries of time. Even I, the priest and initiate, though wise in the secret doctrines of Aforgemen, know little enough of that elusive, ineluctable process whereby the present becomes the past and the future resolves itself into the present. All men have pondered the riddles of duration and transience; have wondered, vainly, to what hour the lost days and the sped cycles are consigned. Some have dreamt that the past slides unchanged, becoming eternity as it slips from our mortal ken; and others have deemed that time is a stairway whose steps crumble one by one behind the climber, falling into a gulf of nothing.

However this may be, I know that she who stood beside me was the Belthoris on whom no shadow of mortality had yet descended. The hour was one new-born in a golden season; and the minutes to come were pregnant with all wonder and surprise belonging to the untried future.

Taller was my beloved than the frail, unbowed lilies of the garden. In her eyes was the supphine of moonless evenings sown with small golden stars. Her lips were strangely curved, but only bitterness and joy had gone to their shaping. She and I had been betrothed from our childhood, and the time of the marriage-rites was now approaching. Our intercourse was wholly free, according to the custom of that world. Often she came to walk with me in my garden and to decorate the altar of that god whose revolving moons and suns would soon bring the season of our felicity.

The moths that flew about us, winged with aerial cloth of gold, were no lighter than our hearts. Making blithe holiday, we tossed our frolic mood to a high flame of rapture. We were akin to the bell hued, climbing flowers, the swift-darting insects, and our spirits blended

and scented with the perfumes that were drawn skyward in the warm air. Unheard by us was the loud murmuring of the mighty city of Ekalod lying beyond my garden walls, for us the many-peopled planet known as Heston no longer existed, and we dwelt alone in a universe of light, in a blossomed heaven. Enraptured by love in the high harmony of those moments, we seemed to touch eternity, and even I, the priest of Alogonous, forgot the blossom-fretting days, the system-dovetailing cycles.

In the sublime folly of passion, I swore then that death or disaster could never mar the perfect communion of our hearts. After we had wreathed the altar, I sought the rarest, the most delectable flowers: frail-curving cups of wine-washed pearl, of mossy pinks and white with scrolled purple lips; and these I twined, between kisses and laughter, in the black mass of Belthoris' hair, saying that no other shrine than that of time should receive its due offering.

Tenderly, with a lover's delay, I lingered over the wreathing, and, ere I had finished, there fluttered to the ground beside us a great, crimson-spotted moth whose wing had somehow been broken in its airy voyaging through the garden. And Belthoris, ever tender of heart and pitiful, turned from me and took up the moth in her hands; and some of the bright blossoms dropped from her hair unheeded. Tears welled from her deep blue eyes, and seeing that the moth was sorely hurt and would never fly again, she refused to be comforted, and no longer would she respond to my passionate wooing. I, who grieved less for the moth than she, was somewhat vexed; and between her sadness and my vexation, there grew between us some tiny, temporary rift . . .

Then, ere love had mended the misunderstanding, then, while we stood before the dross altar of time with sundried hands, with eyes averted from each other, it seemed that a shroud of darkness descended upon the garden. I heard the crash and crumbling of shattered worlds, and a black flowing of ruinous things that went past me through the darkness. The dead leaves of winter were blown about me, and there was a falling of tears or rain. . . . Then the veiled suns came back, high-stationed in cruel splendor, and with them came the knowledge of all that had been, of Belthoris' death and my sorrow, and the madness that had led to forbidden sorcery. Yum now, like all other hours, was the re-announced hour, and doubly irredeemable was my loss. My blood dripped heavily on the dishallowed altar, my faintness grew deathly, and I saw through murky mist the face of Atrox beside me, and the face was like that of some comminatory demon . . .

March 13th: I, John Milwarp, write this date and my name with an odd delirium. My visionary experience under the drug scours ended

with that rilling of my blood on the symbolized dial, that glimpse of the terror-distorted face of Atrax. All this was in another world, in a life removed from the present by births and deaths without number, and yet, it seems, not wholly have I returned from the twice-ancient past. Memories, broken but strangely vivid and living, press upon me from the existence of which my vision was a fragment; and portions of the lore of Uestan, and scraps of its history, and words from its lost language, arise unbidden in my mind.

Above all, my heart is still shadowed by the sorrow of Calaga. His desperate necromancy, which would seem to others no more than a dream within a dream, is stamped as with fire on the black page of recollection. I know the awfulness of the god he had blasphemed; and the foulness of the demoralizing he had done, and the sense of guilt and despair under which he swooned. It is this that I have striven all my life to remember, this which I have been doomed to re-experience. And I fear with a great fear the further knowledge which a second experiment with the drug will reveal to me.

The next entry of Milwarp's diary begins with a strange dating in English script: "The second day of the moon Octalat, in the thousand-and-ninth year of the Red Era." This dating, perhaps, is repeated in the language of Uestan; for, directly beneath it, a line of unknown cyphers is set apart. Several lines of the subsequent text are in the alien tongue, and then, as if by an unconscious reversion, Milwarp continues the diary in English. There is no reference to another experiment with *sourstra*. But apparently such had been made, with a continued revival of his lost memories.

... What genius of the nadii gulf had tempted me to this thing and had caused me to overlook the consequences? Verily, when I called up for myself and Belthoris an hour of former autumn, with all that was attendant upon the hour, that bygone interval was likewise evoked and repeated for the whole world Heston, and the four sons of Heston. From the full midst of spring, all men had stepped backward into autumn, keeping only the memory of things prior to the hour thus resurrected, and knowing not the events future to the hour. But, returning to the present, they recalled with amazement the unnatural necromancy; and fear and bewilderment were upon them; and none could interpret the meaning.

For a brief period, the dead had lived again, the fallen leaves had returned to the bough; the heavenly bodies had stood at a long-abandoned station; the flower had gone back into the seed, the plant into the root. Then, with eternal disorder set among all its cycles, time had resumed its delayed course.

No movement of any cosmic body, no year or instant of the future,

would be precisely as it should have been. The error and discrepancy I had wrought would bear fruit in ways innumerable. The vorns would find themselves at fault, the worlds and atoms would go always a little astray from their appointed hour.

It was of these matters that Atriox spoke, warning me, after he had stanchd my bleeding wound. For he too, in that reformed hour, had gone back and had lived again through a past happening. For him the hour was one in which he had descended into the nether vaults of his house. There, standing in a many-petastaked circle, with burning of unholy incense and uttering of secret formulae, he had called upon a malign spirit from the bowels of Hystan and had questioned it concerning the future. But the spirit black and voluminous as the fumes of pitch, refused to answer him directly and pressed furiously with its clawed members against the confines of the circle. It said only: "Thou hast summoned me at thy peril. Potent are the spells thou hast used and strong is the circle to withstand me, and I am restrained by time and space from the wreaking of my anger upon thee. But haply thou shalt summon me again, albeit in the same hour of the same autumn, and in that summoning the laws of time shall be broken and a rift shall be made in space, and through the rift, though with some delay and draggation, I will yet win to thee."

Saying no more, it prowled restlessly about the circle, and its eyes burned down upon Atriox like caubers in a high-bellied sooty heater, and ever and anon its largest mouth was flattened on the spell-defended air. And in the end he could drive it only after a double repetition of the form of exorcism.

As he told me this tale in the garden Atriox trembled, and his eyes watched the narrow shadows wrought by the high suns; and he seemed to listen for the noise of some evil thing that burrowed toward him beneath the earth.

Fourth day of the moon Occulat. Stricken with terrors beyond those of Atriox, I kept apart in my mansions amid the city of Kalsod. I was still weak with the loss of blood I had yielded to Xezanath; my senses were full of strange shadows; my servants, coming and going after me, were as phantoms, and scarcely I heeded the pale fear in their eyes or heard the dreadful things they whispered. . . . Madness and chaos, they told me, were abroad in Kalsod; the dreamy of Alogomon was angered. All men thought that some hateful doom impended because of that unnatural confusion which had been wrought among the hours of time.

This afternoon they brought me the story of Atriox's death. In hated tones they told me how his neophytes had heard a roaring as of a hoarse trumpet in the chamber where he sat alone with his wizard volumes and paraphernalia. Above the roaring, for a little, human

screams had sounded, together with a clashing as of hinked censers and incensers, a crashing as of overthrown tables and tombs. Blood rilled from under the shut door of the chamber and, sifting, it took from instant to instant the form of due spheres that spelled an unspeakable name. After the noises had ceased, the neophytes waited a long while ere they dared to open the door. Listening at last, they saw the floor and the walls heavily bespattered with blood, and rags of the sorcerer's raiment mingled everywhere with the sheets of his torn volumes of magic, and the shards and mangleings of his flesh shewn amid broken furniture; and his brains dashed in a horrible paste on the high ceiling.

Heeding this tale, I knew that the earthly demon feared by Atmor had found him somehow and had wreaked its wrath upon him. In ways unspeakable, it had reached him through the chain made in ordered time and space by one him repeated through necessity. And because of that lawless chain, the magician's power and love had utterly failed to defend him from the demon. . . .

Fifth day of the moon Oecolat. Atmor, I am sure, had not betrayed me. In so doing, he must have betrayed his own implicit share in my crime: . . . Howbeit, this evening the priests came to my house ere the setting of the westernmost sun: silent, grim, with eyes averted as if from a foulness insupportable. Me, their fellow, they enjoined with both gestures to accompany them. . . .

Thus they took me from my house and along the thoroughfares of Kabad toward the lowering suns. The streets were empty of all other passers, and it seemed that no man dared to meet or behold the blasphemers: . . .

Down the avenue of groom-shaped pillars, I was led to the portals of Alorgamon's lair: these awfully gaping portals arched in the likeness of some devouring chimera's mouth. . . .

Sixth day of the moon Oecolat. They had thrust me into an cubetto beneath the temple, dark, noiseless and soundless except for the mad-dawning, measured drip of water beside me. There I lay and knew not when the night passed and the morning came. Light was admitted only when my captors opened the iron door, coming to lead me before the tribunal: . . .

. . . Thus the priests condemned me, speaking with one voice in whose dreadful volume the tones of all were indistinguishably blended. Then the aged high-priest Helpenor called aloud upon Alorgamon, offering himself as a mouthpiece to the god, and asking the god to pronounce through him the doom that was adequate for such enormities as those of which I had been judged guilty by my fellows.

Instantly, it seemed, the god descended into Helpenor, and the figure of the high-priest appeared to dilate prodigiously beneath his mullings; and the accents that issued from his mouth were like thunder of the upper heaven:

"O Calupa, thou hast set disorder amid all future hours and eons through this evil necromancy. Thereby, moreover, thou hast wrought thine own doom: fettered art thou for ever to the hour thus miserably repeated, apart from its due place in time. According to hieratic rule, thou shalt meet the death of the fiery chains, but deem not that this death is more than the symbol of thy true punishment. Thou shalt pass hereafter through other lives in Heston, and shalt elude midway in the cycles of the world subsequent to Heston in time and space. But through all those incarnations the chains thou hast invoked will attend thee, widening ever like a rift. And always, in all thy lives, the rift will bar thee from reunion with the soul of Belthorn, and always, though merely by an hour, thou shalt miss the love that should otherwise have been oftentimes regained.

"At last, when the chain has widened overmuch, thy soul shall fare no farther in the onward cycles of incarnation. At that time it shall be given thee to remember clearly thine ancient sin, and remembering, thou shalt perish out of time. Upon the body of that latter life shall be found the charred imprint of the chains, as the final token of thy bondage. But they that knew thee will soon forget, and thou shalt belong wholly to the cycles limited for thee by thy sin."

March 29th. I write this date with infinite desperation, trying to convince myself that there is a John Milwarp who exists on Earth, in the Twentieth Century. For two days running, I have not taken the drug anymore; and yet I have returned twice to that odious little of Atorgomon's temple, in which the priest Calupa awaits his doom. Twice I have been immersed in its stagnant darkness, hearing the slow drip of water beside me, like a clepsydra that tells the black ages of the damned.

Even as I write this at my library table, it seems that an ancient midnight planks at the lamp. The bookcases turn to walls of onyx, nighted stone. There is no longer a table . . . nor one who writes . . . and I breathe the noisome darkness of a dragon lying malathorned by my sin, in a lost world.

Eighteenth day of the moon Occult. Today, for the last time, they took me from my prison Helpenor, together with three others, came and led me to the adytum of the god. Far beneath the outer temple we went, through spacious crypts unknown to the common worshippers. There was no word spoken, no glance exchanged between the others

and me; and it seemed that they already regarded me as one cast out from time and claimed by oblivion.

We came ultimately to that sheer-falling gulf in which the spirit of Alogomora is said to dwell. Lights, feeble and far-scattered, shone around it like stars on the rim of cosmic vastness, shedding no ray into the depths. There, in a seat of hewn stone overhanging the frightful verge, I was placed by the executioners; and a ponderous chain of black unrusting metal, stapled in the solid rock, was wound about and about me, circling my naked body and separate limbs, from head to foot.

To this doom, others had been condemned for heresy or impiety . . . though never for a sin such as mine. After the chaining of the victim, he was left for a stated interim, to ponder his crime—and haply to confront the dark divinity of Alogomora. At length, from the abyss into which his position forced him to peer, a light would dawn, and a bolt of strange flame would leap upward, striking the many-coiled chain about him and heating it instantly to the whiteness of condensing iron. The source and nature of the flame were mysterious, and many ascribed it to the god himself rather than to mortal agency. . . .

Even thus they have left me, and have gone away. Long since the burden of the many links, cutting deeper and deeper into my flesh, has become an agony. I am dazed from gazing downward into the abyss—and yet I cannot fall. Beneath, immeasurably beneath, at recurrent intervals, I hear a hollow and solemn sound. Perhaps it is the sigh of sunken waters . . . of cavern-straying winds . . . or the respiration of One that abides in the darkness, meting with his breath the slow minutes, the hours, the days, the ages. . . . My terror has become heavier than the chain, my vertigo is born of a twofold gulf. . . .

Eons have passed by and all the worlds have ebbed into nothingness, like wreckage borne on a chain-falling stream, taking with them the lost face of Belthorin—I am poised above the gaping maw of the Shadow. . . . Somehow, in another world, an evil phantom has written these words . . . a phantom who must fade utterly from time and place, even as I, the doomed priest Calapa. I cannot remember the name of the phantom.

Beneath me, in the black depths, there is an awful brightening. . . .

In the Valley of the Sorceress

by Sax Rohmer

The history of ancient Egypt is by no means complete. Picked together by painstaking research, the main outlines have been mapped out of the confusion which may have been the first on earth—and now at any rate the direct ancestor of that confusion we call "Western." How many chapters of human experience still wait for unearthing beneath the fantastic sands of the Sahara? The penetration into those "dark capitals" of the past must be complete with deeds and wonders. And it is not surprising that out of such confused experience, there arise such legends as the one Sax Rohmer here gives.

I

CONDOR wrote to me, three times before the end (said Neville, Assistant-Inspector of Antiquities, staring vaguely from his open window at a spiral drilling before the Kasr-en-Nil Barracks). He dated his letters from the camp at Deir-el-Bahari. Judging from these, success appeared to be almost within his grasp. He shared my theories, of course, respecting Queen Hathor, and was devoting the whole of his energies to the task of clearing up the great mystery of Ancient Egypt which centers around that queen.

For him, as for me, there was a strange fascination about those defaced walls and roughly obliterated inscriptions. That the queen under whom Egyptian art came to the apogee of perfection should thus have been treated by her successors; that no perfect figure of the wise, famous, and beautiful Hathor should have been spared to posterity, that her very *couchette* should have been ruthlessly removed from every inscription upon which it appeared, presented to Condor's mind a problem only second in interest to the immortal riddle of Clack.

You know my own views upon the matter? My monograph, "Hathor, the Sorceress," embodies my opinion. In short, upon certain evidences, some adduced by Théodore Davis, some by poor Condor, and some resulting from my own inquiries, I have come to the conclusion that the source—real or imaginary—of this queen's power was an intimate acquaintance with what nowadays we term, vaguely, magic. Pursuing her studies beyond the limit which is lawful, she met with a certain end, not uncommon, if the old writings are to be be-

lived, in the case of those who penetrate too far into the realm of the *Bunderland*.

For this reason—the practice of black magic—her statues were dishonored, and her name erased from the monuments. Now, I do not propose to enter into any discussion respecting the reality of such practices; in my monograph I have merely endeavored to show that, according to contemporary belief, the queen was a sorceress. Conder was seeking to prove the same thing, and when I took up the inquiry, it was in the hope of completing his interrupted work.

He wrote to me early in the winter of 1903, from his camp by the Rock Temple. Davis's tomb, at Bihān el-Mulūk, with its long, narrow passage, apparently had little interest for him; he was at work on the high ground behind the temple, at a point one hundred yards or so due west of the upper platform. He had an idea that he should find there the mummies of Hataou—and another; the latter, a certain Sen-Mitt, who appears in the inscriptions of the reign as an architect high in the queen's favor. The archaeological points of the letter do not concern us in the least, but there was one odd little paragraph which I had cause to remember afterwards.

"A girl belonging to some Arab tribe," wrote Conder, "came racing to the camp two nights ago to claim my protection. What crime she had committed, and what punishment she feared, were far from clear, but she clung to me, trembling like a leaf, and positively refused to depart. It was a difficult situation, for a camp of fifty native excavators, and one highly respectable European enthusiast, afforded no suitable quarters for an Arab girl—and a very personable Arab girl. At any rate, she is still here, I have had a sort of lean-to rigged up in a little valley east of my own tent, but it is very embarrassing."

Nearly a month passed before I heard from Conder again, then came a second letter, with the news that on the eve of a great discovery—as he believed—his entire native staff—the whole fifty—had deserted one night in a body! "Two days' work," he wrote, "would have seen the tomb opened—for I am more than ever certain that my plans are accurate. Then I woke up one morning to find every man pack of my fellows missing! I went down into the village where a lot of them live, in a towering rage, but not one of the brutes was to be found, and their relations professed entire ignorance respecting their whereabouts. What caused me almost as much anxiety as the check in my work was the fact that *Mahda*—the Arab girl—had vanished also. I am wondering if the thing has any sinister significance."

Conder finished with the statement that he was making tremendous efforts to secure a new gang. "But," said he, "I shall finish the excavation, if I have to do it with my own hands."

His third and last letter contained even stranger matters than the two preceding it. He had succeeded in borrowing a few men from the

British Archaeological Camp in the Fáyûm. Then, just as the work was restarting, the Arab girl, Malihra, turned up again, and entreated him to bring her down the Nile, "at least as far as Dendera. For the vengeance of her tribesmen," stated Condor, "otherwise would result not only in her own death, but in mine! At the moment of writing I am in two minds what to do. If Malihra is to go upon this journey, I do not feel justified in sending her alone, and there is no one here who could perform the duty," etc.

I began to wonder, of course, and I had it in mind to take the train to Luxor merely in order to see this Arab maiden, who seemed to occupy so prominent a place in Condor's mind. However, Fate would have it otherwise, and the next thing I heard was that Condor had been brought into Cairo, and was at the English hospital.

He had been bitten by a cat—presumably from the neighboring village, and although the doctor at Luxor dealt with the bite at once, traveled down with him, and placed him in the hand of the *Pasteur* man at the hospital, he died, as you remember, in the night of his arrival, raving mad, the *Pasteur* treatment failed entirely.

I never saw him before the end, but they told me that his hands were horribly like those of a rat. His eyes changed in some way, too, I understand, and, with his fingers all contracted, he tried to scratch everyone and everything within reach.

They had to strap the poor beggar down, and even then he tore the sheets into ribbons.

Well, as soon as possible, I made the necessary arrangements to finish Condor's inquiry. I had access to his papers, plans, etc., and in the spring of the same year I took up my quarters near *Deu-el-Bahari*, roped off the approaches to the camp, stuck up the usual notices, and prepared to finish the excavation, which, I gathered, was in a fairly advanced state.

My first surprise came very soon after my arrival, for when, with the plan before me, I started out to find the shaft, I found it, certainly, but only with great difficulty.

It had been filled in again with sand and loose rock right to the very top!

II

All my inquiries availed me nothing. With what object the excavation had been thus closed I was unable to conjecture. That Condor had not reclosed it I was quite certain, for at the time of his mishap he had actually been at work at the bottom of the shaft, as inquiries from a native of Surfoo, in the Fáyûm, who was his only companion at the time, had revealed.

In his eagerness to complete the inquiry, Condor, by lantern light,

had been engaged upon a solitary night-shift below, and the tabid cat had apparently fallen into the pit, probably in a frenzy of fear, it had attacked Condor, after which it had escaped.

Only this one man was with him, and he, for some reason that I could not make out, had apparently been sleeping in the temple—quite a considerable distance from Condor's camp. The poor fellow's cries had aroused him, and he had met Condor running down the path and away from the shaft.

This, however, was good evidence of the existence of the shaft at the time, and as I stood contemplating the tightly packed rocks which alone marked its site, I grew more and more mystified, for this task of reaching the ceiling represented much hard labor.

Beyond perfecting my plans in one or two particulars, I did little on the day of my arrival. I had only a handful of men with me, all of whom I knew, having worked with them before, and beyond clearing Condor's shaft I did not intend to excavate further.

Hatsa's Temple presents a lively enough scene in the daytime during the winter and early spring months, with the streams of tourists constantly passing from the white causeway to Cook's Rest House on the edge of the desert. There had been a goodly number of visitors that day to the temple below, and one or two of the more curious and venture-some had scrambled up the steep path to the little plateau which was the scene of my operations. None had penetrated beyond the notice boards, however, and now, with the evening sky passing through those immemorial shades which defy palette and brush, which can only be distinguished by the trained eye, but which, from palest blue melt into exquisite pink, and by some magical combination form that deep violet which does not exist to perfection elsewhere than in the skies of Egypt, I found myself in the silence and the solitude of "the Holy Valley."

I stood at the edge of the plateau, looking out at the rosy belt which marked the course of the distant Nile, with the Arabian hills vaguely sketched beyond. The rocks stood up against that prospect as great black smudges, and what I could see of the causeway looked like a gray smear upon a dark canvas. Beneath me were the chambers of the Rock Temple, with those wall paintings depicting events in the reign of Hatsa which rank among the wonders of Egypt.

Not a sound disturbed my reverie, save a faint clatter of cooking utensils from the camp behind me—a desecration of that sacred solitude. Then a dog began to howl in the neighboring village. The dog ceased, and faintly to my ears came the note of a reed pipe. The breeze died away, and with it the piping.

I turned back to the camp and, having partaken of a frugal supper, turned in upon my campaigner's bed, thoroughly enjoying my free-

dom from the routine of official life in Cairo, and looking forward to the morrow's work pleasantly.

Under such circumstances a man sleeps well, and when, in an uncanny gray half-light, which probably heralded the dawn, I awoke with a start, I knew that something of an unusual nature alone could have disturbed my slumbers.

Firstly, then, I identified this with a concerted howling of the village dogs. They seemed to have conspired to make night hideous. I have never heard such an eerie din my life. Then it gradually began to die away, and I realized, secondly, that the howling of the dogs and my own awakening might be due to some common cause. This idea grew upon me and, as the howling subsided, a sort of disquiet possessed me and, despite my efforts to shake it off, grew more urgent with the passing of every moment.

In short, I fancied that the thing which had alarmed or enraged the dogs was passing from the village through the Holy Valley, upward to the Temple, upward to the plateau, and was approaching me.

I have never experienced an identical sensation since, but I seemed to be audient of a sort of psychic patrol, which, from a remote promise, swelled fortissimo, to an intimate but silent climax, which beat in some way upon my brain, but not through the faculty of hearing, for now the night was deathly still.

Yet I was persuaded of some approach—of the coming of something sinister, and the suspense of waiting had become almost insupportable, so that I began to accuse my Spartan supper of having given me nightmare, when the tent-flap was suddenly raised and, outlined against the paling blue of the sky, with a sort of reflected efflu light playing upon her face, I saw an Arab girl looking in at me!

By dint of exerting all my self-control I managed to restrain the cry and upward start which this apparition prompted. Quite still, with my fists tightly clenched, I lay and looked into the eyes which were looking into mine.

The style of literary work which it has been my lot to cultivate fails me in describing that beautiful and evil face. The features were severely classical and small, something of the Bisharin type, with a cruel little mouth and a rounded chin, firm to hardness. In the eyes alone lay the hagnor of the Orient, they were exceedingly—indeed, excessively—long and narrow. The ordinary ragged, picturesque finery of a desert girl bedecked this midnight visitant, who, motionless, stood there watching me.

I once read a work by Pierre de l'Ancre, dealing with the Black Sabbaths of the Middle Ages, and now the evil beauty of this Arab face threw my memory back to those singular pages, for, perhaps, owing to the reflected light which I have mentioned, although the

explanation scarcely seemed adequate, those long, narrow eyes shone outlike in the gloom.

Suddenly I made up my mind. Throwing the blanket from me, I leaped to the ground, and in a flash had gripped the girl by the wrists. Confuting some lingering doubts, she proved to be substantial enough. My electric torch lay upon a box at the foot of the bed and, stooping, I caught it up and turned its searching rays upon the face of my captive.

She fell back from me, staring like a wild creature trapped, then dropped upon her knees and began to plead—began to plead in a voice and with a manner which touched some chord of consciousness that I could swear had never spoken before, and has never spoken since.

She spoke in Arabic, of course, but the words fell from her lips as liquid music in which lay all the beauty and all the deviltry of the "Siren's Song." Fully opening her astonished eyes, she looked up at me and, with her left hand pressed to her bosom, told me how she had fled from an unwelcome marriage, how, an outcast and a pariah, she had hidden in the desert places for three days and three nights, sustaining life only by means of a few dates which she had brought with her, and quenching her thirst with stolen watermelons.

"I can bear it no longer, effendi! Another night out in the desert, with the cruel moon beating, beating, beating upon my brain, with creeping things coming out from the rocks, wiggling, wriggling, their many feet making whisperings in the sand—ah, it will kill me! And I am for ever outcast from my tribe, from my people. No tent of all the Arabs, though I fly to the gates of Damascus, is open to me, none I enter as sharee, as a slave, as a plaything, as a toy. My heart"—furiously she beat upon her breast—"is empty and desolate, effendi. I am sorer than the lowliest thing that creeps upon the sand, yet the God that made that creeping thing made me also—and you, you, who are merciful and strong, would not crush any creature because it was weak and helpless."

I had released her wrist now, and was looking down at her in a sort of stupor. The evil which at first I had seemed to perceive in her was effaced, wiped out as an artist wipes out an error in his drawing. Her dark beauty was speaking to me in a language of its own; a strange language, yet one so intelligible that I struggled in vain to disregard it. And her voice, her gestures, and the witch-lure of her eyes were whipping up my blood to a fever heat of passionate sorrow—of despair. Yes, incredible as it sounds, despair!

In short, as I see it now, this siren of the wilderness was playing upon me as an accomplished musician might play upon a harp, striking this string and that at will, and sounding each with such full notes as they had rarely, if ever, emitted before.

Most damnable anomaly of all, I—Edward Neville, archaeologist, most pious and matter-of-fact man in Cairo, perhaps—knew that this woman who had burst into my tent, upon whom I had set eyes for the first time scarce three minutes before, held me enthralled; and yet, with her wondrous eyes upon me, I could summon up no sentiment, and could offer but poor resistance.

"In the Little Oasis, *effendi*, I have a sister who will admit me into her household, if only as a servant. There I can be safe, there I can rest. O English, at home in England you have a sister of your oval! Would you see her pursued, a hunted thing from rock to rock, crouching for shelter in the hair of some jackal, stealing that she might live—and flying always, never resting, her heart leaping for fear, flying, dying, with nothing but disaster before her?"

She shuddered and clasped my left hand in both her own convulsively, pulling it down to her bosom.

"There can be only one thing, *effendi*," she whispered. "Do you not see the white bones bleaching in the sun?"

Throwing all my resolution into the act, I released my hand from her clasp and, turning aside, sat down upon the box which served me as chair and table, too.

A thought had come to my assistance, had strengthened me in the moment of my greatest weakness; it was the thought of that Arab girl mentioned in Condor's letters. And a scheme of things, an incredible scheme, that embraced and explained some, if not all, of the horrible circumstances attendant upon his death, began to form in my brain.

Distant it was, stretching out beyond the realm of things natural and proper, yet I clung to it, for there, in the solitude, with this wilfully beautiful creature kneeling at my feet, and with her uncanny powers of fascination yet enveloping me like a cloak, I found it not so improbable as inevitably it must have seemed at another time.

I turned my head, and through the gloom sought to look into the long eyes. As I did so they closed and appeared as two darkly luminous slits in the perfect oval of the face.

"You are an impostor!" I said in Arabic, speaking firmly and deliberately. "To Mr. Condor"—I could have sworn that she started slightly at sound of the name—"you called yourself Mahira. I know you, and I will have nothing to do with you."

But in saying it I had to turn my head aside, for the strangest, saddest impulses were bubbling up in my brain in response to the glances of those half-shut eyes.

I reached for my coat, which lay upon the foot of the bed, and, taking out some loose money, I placed fifty piastres in the nerveless brown hand.

"That will enable you to reach the Little Oasis, if such is your desire," I said. "It is all I can do for you, and now—you must go."

The light of the dawn was growing stronger momentarily, so that I could see my visitor quite clearly. She rose to her feet, and stood before me, a straight, slim figure, sweeping air from head to foot with such a glance of passionate contempt as I had never known or suffered.

She threw back her head magnificently, dashed the money on the ground at my feet and, turning, triped out of the tent.

For a moment I hesitated, doubting, questioning my humanity, tooting my horns, then I took a step forward, and peered out across the plateau. Not a soul was in sight. The rocks stood up gray and bare, and beneath lay the carpet of the desert stretching unlooked to the shadows of the Nile Valley.

III

We commenced the work of clearing the shaft at an early hour that morning. The strangest ideas were now playing in my mind, and in some way I felt myself to be in opposition to definite reality. My excavators labored with a will and, once we had penetrated below the first three feet or so of tightly packed stone, it became a mere matter of shoveling, for apparently the lower part of the shaft had been filled up principally with mud.

I calculated that four days' work at the outside would see the shaft clear to the base of Condor's excavation. There remained, according to his own notes, only another six feet or so; but it was solid limestone—the roof of the passage, if his plans were correct, communicating with the tomb of Hattani.

With the approach of night, tired as I was, I felt little inclination for sleep. I lay down on my bed with a small Browning pistol under the pillow, but after an hour or so of nervous listening drifted off into slumber. As on the night before, I awoke shortly before the coming of dawn.

Again the village dogs were raising a hideous outcry, and again I was keenly conscious of some ever-moving menace. This consciousness grew stronger as the howling of the dogs grew fainter, and the sense of approach assailed me as on the previous occasion.

I sat up immediately with the pistol in my hand and, gently raising the tent flap, looked out over the darkness. For a long time I could perceive nothing, then, vaguely outlined against the sky, I detected something that moved above the rocky edge.

It was so indefinite in form that for a time I was unable to identify it, but as it slowly rose higher and higher, two luminous eyes—slowly defined eyes, since they glittered gradually in the darkness—came into view. In character and in shape they were the eyes of a cat, but in point of size they were larger than the eyes of any cat I had ever seen.

Nor were they jackal eyes. It occurred to me that some predatory beast from the Sudan might conceivably have strayed thus far north.

The presence of such a creature would account for the nightly disturbance amongst the village dogs, and, dismissing the superstitious notions which had led me to associate the mysterious Arab girl with the phenomenon of the howling dogs, I schooled upon this new idea with a sort of gladness.

Stepping boldly out of the tent, I strode in the direction of the gleaming eyes. Although my only weapon was the Browning pistol, it was a weapon of considerable power and, moreover, I counted upon the well-known cowardice of nocturnal animals. I was not disappointed in the result.

The eyes dropped out of sight, and as I leaped to the edge of rock overhanging the Temple a lithe shape went streaking off in the grayness beneath me. Its coloring appeared to be black, but this appearance may have been due to the bad light. Certainly it was no cat, was no jackal, and once, twice, thrice my Browning spit into the darkness.

Apparently I had not scared a bit, but the loud reports of the weapon aroused the men sleeping in the camp, and soon I was surrounded by a ring of inquiring faces.

But there I stood on the rock-edge, looking out across the desert in silence. Something in the big, luminous eyes, something in the sinuous, flying shape had spoken to me intimately, horribly.

Hassan es-Sugra, the headman, touched my arm, and I knew that I must offer some explanation.

"Jackals," I said shortly. And with an other word I walked back to my tent.

The night passed without further event, and in the morning we addressed ourselves to the work with such a will that I saw, to my satisfaction, that by noon of the following day the labor of clearing the loose sand would be completed.

During the preparation of the evening meal I became aware of a certain disquiet in the camp, and I noted a disinclination on the part of the native Libyans to stay far from the tents. They hung together in a group, and whilst individually they seemed to avoid meeting my eye, collectively they watched me in a furtive fashion.

A gang of Moslem workmen calls for delicate handling, and I wondered if, inadvertently, I had transgressed in some way their unbound code of conduct. I called Hassan es-Sugra aside.

"What ails the men?" I asked him. "Have they some grievance?"

Hassan spread his palms eloquently.

"If they have," he replied, "they are secret about it, and I am not in their confidence. Shall I thrust three or four of them in order to learn the nature of this grievance?"

"No, thanks all the same," I said, laughing at this characteristic pro-

posal "If they refuse to work to-morrow, there will be time enough for you to adopt those measures."

On this, the third night of my sojourn in the Holy Valley by the Temple of Hatanu, I slept soundly and uninterruptedly. I had been looking forward with the keenest zest to the morrow's work, which promised to bring me within sight of my goal, and when Hatanu came to awaken me, I leaped out of bed immediately.

Hatanu es-Sugra, having performed his duty, did not, as was his custom, retire, he stood there, a tall, angular figure looking at me strangely.

"Well?" I said.

"There is trouble," was his simple reply. "Follow me, Neville Effendi."

Wondering greatly, I followed him across the plateau and down the slip to the excavation. There I pulled up short with a cry of amazement.

Cushor's shaft was filled in to the very top, and presented, to my astonished gaze, much the same aspect that had greeted me upon my first arrival.

"The men——" I began.

Hatanu es-Sugra spread wide his palms.

"Gone!" he replied. "Those Coptic dogs, those eaters of carrion, have fled in the night."

"And this"—I pointed to the little mound of broken granite and mud—"is their work?"

"So it would seem," was the reply, and Hatanu rolled his sublime contempt.

I stood looking bitterly at this destruction of my toil. The strangeness of the thing at the moment did not strike me, in my anger, I was only concerned with the outrageous impudence of the missing workmen, and if I could have laid hands upon one of them it had surely gone hard with him.

As for Hatanu es-Sugra, I believe he would cheerfully have broken the necks of the entire gang. But he was a man of resource.

"It is so newly filled in," he said, "that you and I, in three days, or in four, can restore it to the state it had reached when those nameless dogs, who regularly prayed with their shoes on, those devourers of pork, began their duty work."

His example was stimulating. I was not going to be beaten, either.

After a hasty breakfast, the pair of us set to work with pick and shovel and basket. We worked as those slaves must have worked whose toil was directed by the lash of the Pharaoh's overseer. My back acquired an almost permanent crook, and every muscle in my body seemed to be on fire. Not even in the midday heat did we slacken or stop our toils, and when dusk fell that night a great mound had arisen

beside Condor's shaft, and we had excavated to a depth it had taken our gang double the time to reach.

When at last we threw down our tools in utter exhaustion, I held out my hand to Hassan, and wrung his brown fist enthusiastically. His eyes sparkled as he met my glance.

"Neville Eftendi," he said, "you are a true Muslim!"

And only the initiated can know how high was the compliment conveyed.

That night I slept the sleep of utter weariness, yet it was not a dreamless sleep, or perhaps it was not so deep as I supposed, for blazing cat-eyes encircled me in my dreams, and a constant feline howling seemed to fill the night.

When I awoke the sun was blazing down upon the rock outside my tent and, springing out of bed, I perceived, with amazement, that the morning was far advanced. Indeed, I could hear the distant voices of the donkey-boys and other hangers-on of the coming tourists.

Why had Hassan es-Sugra not awakened me?

I stepped out of the tent and called him in a loud voice. There was no reply. I ran across the plateau to the edge of the hollow.

Condor's shaft had been reclosed to the top!

Language fails me to convey the wave of anger, amazement, incredulity, which swept over me. I looked across to the deserted camp and back to my own tent, I looked down at the mound, where but a few hours before had been a pit, and seriously I began to question whether I was mad or whether madness had seized upon all who had been with me. Then, pegged down upon the heap of broken stones, I perceived, fluttering, a small piece of paper.

Dully I walked across and picked it up. Hassan, a man of some education, clearly was the writer. It was a pencil scrawl in doubtful Arabic and, not without difficulty, I deciphered it as follows:

"Fly, Neville Eftendi! This is a haunted place!"

Standing there by the mound, I tore the scrap of paper into minute fragments, bitterly casting them from me upon the ground. It was incredible; it was insane.

The man who had written that absurd message, the man who had undone his own work, had the reputation of being fearless and honorable. He had been with me before a score of times, and had quelled petty intrigues in the camp in a manner which marked him a born overrider. I could not understand, I could scarcely believe the evidence of my own senses.

What did I do?

I suppose there are some who would have abandoned the thing at once and for always, but I take it that the national traits are strong within me. I went over to the camp and prepared my own breakfast; then, shouldering pick and shovel, I went down into the valley and set

to work. What ten men could not do, what two men had failed to do, one man was determined to do.

It was about half an hour after commencing my task, and when, I suppose, the surprise and rage occasioned by the discovery had begun to wear off, that I found myself making comparisons between my own case and that of Condon. It became more and more evident to me that events—mysterious events—were repeating themselves.

The frightful happenings attendant upon Condon's death were marshalling in my mind. The sun was blazing down upon me, and distant voices could be heard in the desert stillness. I knew that the plain below was dotted with pleasure-seeking tourists, yet nervous terrors shook me. Frankly, I dreaded the evening of the night.

Well, tenacity or pugnacity conquered, and I worked on until dusk. My supper despatched, I sat down on my bed and toyed with the Browning.

I realized already that sleep, under existing conditions, was impossible. I perceived that on the morrow I must abandon my one-man enterprise, pocket my guide, in a sense, and seek new assistants, new companions.

The fact was coming home to me conclusively that a menace, real and not mythical, hung over that valley. Although, in the morning sunlight and filled with indignation, I had thought contemptuously of Hamao co-Sugra, now, in the mysterious violet dusk so conducive to calm consideration, I was forced to admit that he was at least as brave a man as I. And he had fled! What did that night hold in keeping for me?

* * * * *

I will tell you what occurred, and it is the only explanation I have to give of why Condon's shaft, said to communicate with the real tomb of Hamao, to this day remains unopened.

There, on the edge of my bed, I sat far into the night, not daring to close my eyes. But physical weariness conquered in the end and, although I have no recollection of its coming, I must have succumbed to sleep, since I remember—can never forget—a repetition of the dream, or what I had assumed to be a dream, of the night before.

A ring of blazing green eyes surrounded me. At one point this ring was broken, and in a kind of nightmare panic I leaped at that promise of safety, and found myself outside the tent.

Lithe, slinking shapes haunted me in—cat shapes, ghoul shapes, veritable figures of the pit. And the eyes, the shapes, although they were the eyes and shapes of cats, sometimes changed elusively, and became the wicked eyes and the sinuous, writhing shapes of women. Always the ring was incomplete, and always I retreated in the

only direction by which retreat was possible. I retreated from those cat-things.

In this fashion I came at last to the shaft, and there I saw the tools which I had left at the end of my day's toil.

Looking around me, I saw also, with such a pang of horror as I cannot hope to convey to you, that the ring of green eyes was now unbroken about me.

And it was closing in.

Nonetheless feline creatures were crowding silently to the edge of the pit, some preparing to spring down upon me where I stood. A voice seemed to speak in my brain; it spoke of capitulation, telling me to accept defeat lest, avenging, my fate be the fate of Condor.

Peals of shrill laughter rose upon the silence. The laughter was mine.

Falling the night with this hideous, hysterical merriment, I was working feverishly with pick and with shovel filling in the shaft.

The end? The end is that I awoke, in the morning, lying, not on my bed, but outside on the plateau, my hands torn and bleeding and every muscle in my body throbbing agonizingly. Remembering my dream—for even in that moment of awakening I thought I had dreamed—I staggered across to the valley of the excavation.

Condor's shaft was reached to the top.

The Kelpie

by Maule Wade Wellman

The trouble with many writers of weird genre is the tendency to stick to the old and established grooves—and not to take the time to dig into the voluminous supernatural comping found in the pages of folklore. Certainly there are many good tales to be written about the other spectral beings of antiquity—the spirits of field and tree and stream. Here we have an example of such a creature. Meet the kelpie, a pet not recommended to horse-aphobic families. Just why, you'll see.

NO SOONER had Cannon closed and latched the door than Lu was in his arms, and they were kissing with the hungry fierceness of lovers who doubt their own good fortune. Thus for a delicious, heart-battering moment, then Lu pulled nervously away. "We're being watched," she whispered breathlessly.

The big, dark man laughed down at her worried blue eyes, her shining wealth of ash-brown hair, her face like an ivory heart, the apprehensive taintness of her slender figure. "That's guilty conscience, Lu," he teased. "You know I wouldn't have invited you to my apartment without giving my man the night off. And even if someone did see us, why be afraid? Don't we love each other?"

She allowed him to bring her into the parlor and draw her down beside him on a divan, but she still stared apprehensively.

"I could swear there were eyes upon us," she insisted, half apologetically. "Hostile eyes."

"Maybe they're spirits," Cannon cried gayly, his own twinkling gaze sweeping around to view in turn the paintings on the walls, the hooded lamps, the bookshelves, the rich, comfortable furniture, the big box-shaped aquarium in the darkest corner. Again he chuckled. "Spirits—that's a pun, you know. The kindest form of wit."

From a taboret at his elbow he lifted a decanter of brandy and poured two drinks with a humorous flourish. Lu, forgetting her uneasiness of a moment before, lifted her glass. "To us," she toasted.

But Cannon set his own drink down untasted and peered around a second time, this time without gaiety. "You've got me flunking it now," he muttered.

"Thinking what?"

"That something is watching—and not liking what it sees." He glanced quickly over his shoulder, then continued, as if seeking to reassure them both. "Nothing in that corner, of course, except the aquarium."

"What's the latest tenantry there?" Lu asked, glad to change the disquieting subject.

"Some Scotch water plants—new laboratory project." Cannon was at ease the moment his hobby came into the conversation. "They arrived this afternoon in a sealed tin box. Doctor MacKenzie's letter says they were gathered from the Pool Kelp, wherever that is in his highland wilderness. I'm letting them soak and wash overnight. In the morning I'll begin experimenting."

Lu sipped more brandy, her eyes interested. "Pool Kelp," she repeated. "It sounds seaweedy."

"But these are fresh-water growths. As I say, I never heard of the pool before," Cannon broke off. "Here, though, why talk botany when we can—"

His lips abruptly smothered hers, his arms gathered her so close as to bruise her. But even as she yielded happily to his embrace the telephone rang loudly in the front entry. Cannon released her with a muttered curse of impatience, rose and hurried out to answer. He closed the door behind him, and his voice, muffled and indistinct, sounded aggrieved as he spoke into the transmitter.

Lu, holding her brandy glass, picked up the drink Cannon had set down. As she lifted it to her lips she glanced idly over the rim of the glass at the moist tangle in the aquarium. In the dim light it seemed to fall into all manner of rich greens—darkest emerald, beryl, malachite, olive, grass, lettuce. Something moved, too, ellipoid and swerved in the heart of the little submerged grove.

Cannon was still talking. Lu rose, drink in hand, to stroll curiously toward the big glass box. As she did so the moving trifle seemed to glide upward toward the surface. Coming closer yet, Lu paused to peer in the half-light.

A fish? If so, a very green fish and a very small one—perhaps a tadpole. A bubble broke audibly on top of the water. Lu, genuinely interested, bent closer, just as something rose through the little ripples and hooked its tip on the rim of the aquarium.

It was a tiny, spinash-colored hand.

Half a second later another fringe of tiny fingers appeared, clutching the rim in turn. Lu, woodenly motionless, stared in her effort to rationalize. She could see the tiny digits, each tapering and flexible, each armed with a jet-colored claw. Through the glass, under and behind the fingers, she made out thumbs—left, opposable thumbs—and smooth, wet palms of a dead, oystery gray. Her breath caught in mute, helpless astonishment. A blunt head rose slowly into view behind and

between the fists, something with flat brow, broad lump of nose and wide mouth, like a grotesque Mayan mask—and it was growling.

Lu told herself, a little stupidly, that she must not have seen clearly at first. She had thought the creature a little green minnow, but it was as big as a squirrel. No, as big as a baby! Its bright eyes, white-ringed, flared boss, projecting a wave of malignant challenge that staggered her like a blow. The full, lead-lined lips parted loosely and the forked tip of a purple tongue quivered out for a moment. A sickly odor steamed up to Lu's nostrils, making her dizzy and weak. Wet, scabby-groom shoulders had heaved into view by now, and after them the twin mounds of a grotesquely feminine bosom. The thing was climbing out at her, and as it did so it swelled and grew, grew. . . .

The brandy-glass fell from her hand and loudly exploded into splinters upon the floor. The sound of the breaking gave Lu back her voice, and she screamed tremendously, then managed to move back and away, half stumbling and half staggering. The monster, all damp and green and stinking, was writhing a leg into view. Lu noted that, and then everything went into a whirling white blur and she began to collapse.

Faintly she heard the rush of Cannon's feet, felt the clutch of his strong arms as though many thin screens of fabric separated them from her. He almost shouted her name in panic. After a moment her sight and mind cleared, and she looked up into his concerned face. With all her shaken strength she clung to him.

"That thing," she chattered, "that horrid female thing in the aquarium—"

Cannon managed a comforting tone. "But there's nothing, dearest, nothing at all. Those two brandies—you took mine, too, you shameless glutton—went to your head."

"Look at it!" She pointed an unsteady finger. "Deep down there in the weeds!"

He looked. "Oh, that?" he laughed. "I noticed it, too, just before you came. It's a little frog or toad—must have been gathered with the weeds and shipped all the way from Scotland."

Lu caressed her throbbing forehead with her slender white hand and mumbled something about "seeing things." Already she believed that she had somehow dreamed of the green water-monster. Still, it was a distinct effort to walk with Cannon to the aquarium and look in.

Through the thick tangle of stems and fronds that made a dank stew in the water she could make out a tiny something that wriggled and glided. It was only minnow-size after all, and seemed smooth and innocuous. Funny what notions two quick drinks will give you. . . . She lowered a criped palm toward the surface, as if to scoop down and seize the little creature, but the chilly touch of the topmost weed-tips repelled her, and she drew back her arm.

"You'd never catch it," Cannon told her. "It won't wait for you to grab. I had a try when I first saw it, and got a wet sleeve—and this."

He held out his left hand. For the first time that evening Lo saw the gold band that he wore on his third finger.

"A ring," her lover explained. "I was lying on the bottom. Apparently it came with the weeds, too."

"You put it on your wedding finger?" Lo asked.

"That was the only one it would fit," Cannon defended as she caught his hand and tugged with all her might at the ring. It did not budge.

"Please," she begged, "get rid of it."

"Why, Lu, what's the trouble? Are you being jealous because a present was given me by that mess of weed—or maybe by the little lady frog?"

The tiny swimmer in the tank splashed water, as if in punctuation of his pike, and Cannon, falling abruptly silent, suddenly began wrenching at the gold encrust. But not even his strength, twice that of Lu, could bring it over the joint.

"Here I don't like this," he announced, his voice steady but a little tight. "I'm going to put soap on my finger. That will make the thing slip off."

Lu made no reply, but her eyes encouraged him. Cannon bowed her pale forehead, strode across the room and into a little corridor beyond. After a moment Lu could hear the spurt of a water-jet in a bowl, then the sound of industrious scrubbing with lather.

In command of herself once again but still a trifle faint and shaky, Lu leaned her hand lightly upon the thick, smooth edge of the aquarium glass. A fond little smile came to her lips as she pondered on Cannon's eagerness to please her whim. Not even in a silly little matter like this one did he cross her will or offer argument that might embarrass or hurt her. The shedding of that ring would be a symbol between them, of understanding and faith.

Her eyes dropped to the table that stood against the aquarium, with its litter of papers and notebooks. At the edge nearest Lu lay a thick volume bound in gray—a dictionary. What was the term she had puzzled over? Oh, yes. . . . Still lounging with one hand on the glass, she flipped the book open with the other and turned the pages to the K's.

Kelp. Any one of various large brown seaweeds of the families *Laminariaceae* and *Fucales*.

Her hazy memory had been right, then, about the word. But why should a body of fresh water be called Pool Kelp? Glancing back at the page, her eyes caught the next definition.

It answered her question.

Kelpies. (Gael, Myth.) A malicious water spirit or demon believed

to haunt streams or marshes. Sometimes it falls in love with human beings, striving jealously against mortal rivals.

The words swam before her vision, for the snake-scent had risen sickeningly around her. And something was gripping the hand that rested on the rim of the tank.

Lu's mouth opened but, as before, terror throttled her. Like a sleeper in the throes of nightmare, she struggled half-heartedly. She dared not look, yet some power forced her head around.

The grip had shifted to her wrist. Long, claw-tipped fingers were clamped there—fingers as large as her own, sickle-brown green and of a swampy chill. Lu's eyes slid in fascinated horror along the scale-ridged, coiled arm to the scaly-looking body, stock and fastened over with weed-fronds, that was rising from the water. Another foul hand stole swiftly out, fastened on Lu's shoulder, and jerked her close. The flat, grotesque face, grown to human size, was level with hers, its eyes triumphant within their dead white rings, its dark tongue quivering between gaping lips.

Yet again Lu tried to find her voice. All she could achieve was a wordless moan, no louder than a sigh.

"Did you call, sweetheart?" came Cannon's cheery response from his washing. "I'll be with you in a minute now; this thing is still hanging on like a poor relation!"

The reptilian jaw dropped suddenly, like the lid of a box turned upside down. Lu stared into the slate-gray cave that was the yawning mouth. Teeth, sharp teeth, gleamed there—not one row, but many.

Lu's hands lifted feebly in an effort at defense, then dropped wearily to her sides. The monster crinkled its humid features in something like a triumphant grin. Then its blunt head shot forward with incredible readiness, mauling Lu at the juncture of neck and shoulder.

For a moment she felt exquisite pain, as of many piercing needles. After that she neither felt, heard nor saw anything.

The medical examiner was drawing a sheet over the still, agony-distorted body of the dead girl. The police sergeant, unfolding his final notes, addressed Cannon with official sternness.

"Sorry," he said, "but you haven't explained this business at all satisfactorily. You come down to headquarters with me."

Cannon glanced wearily up from his senseless wrestling with the ring that would not quit his wedding finger. "I didn't do it," he reiterated dully.

The medical examiner was also speaking, more to himself than anyone: "An autopsy might clear up some points. Those inflamed, vaporated wounds on the neck might have been made by a big water-snake. Or," he added, with a cursory glance at the serpent, "by a poisoned weapon constructed to simulate such a creature's bite."

Cannon's last vestige of control went. "I tell you," he snarled desperately, "that she and I were the only living things here tonight—the only living things." He broke off, becoming aware of movement in the aquarium. "Except, of course, that little frog in there."

The creature among the weeds, a tiny sliver of agile greenness, hovered for a moment on the surface of the water as it in exultation, then, before any of the three watchers could get a fair look at it, dived deep into the heart of the floating mass.

The Captured Cross-Section

by Miles J. Brown, M.D.

Ever since imaginative writers got hold of the concept advanced by higher mathematics of a hypothetical "fourth" dimension, we have been treated to a vast amount of explanations and speculations. With convincing logic, we have been shown that this new dimension—at right angles to those our senses perceive—is time, is density, is a parallel world, is infinity, and is faith. Actually the fourth dimension resolves as unproved as ever—a mere mathematical premise. In this early introduction class, Dr. Brown presents one aspect of a fourth dimension penetration . . . an amazing one which makes use of some of the qualities of an object having the ability to find an easier way out of a perfectly sealed box than that possessed by Houdini.

THE HEAD of Miles Heagry, Instructor in Mathematics, was bent low over the sheets of figures, and becomingly close to it, leaned the curly-haired one of his fiancée, Sheila Mathers, daughter of the Head of the Mathematics Department. Sheila was no mean mathematician herself, and had published some original papers.

"Are you trying to tell me that this stuff makes any sense?" she laughed, shaking her head over the stack of papers.

"Your father couldn't follow it either," Heagry answered. "He used abusive language at me when I showed it to him."

"Now don't be mean to my father. Someday you'll learn that under his blustering exterior he has a heart of gold. But what do these things mean, and what did you bring me in here for?"

"You have followed through Einstein's equation for the transformation of coordinates, have you not?" Heagry explained. "Well, this is Einstein's stuff, only I've carried it further than he did."

"It doesn't look like mine——" Sheila shook her head.

"That is because I am using four coordinates. The most complicated existing equations, with the three coordinates x , y , and z , and involving three equations each with the variables:

$$\begin{array}{lll} x_1 & y_1 & z_1 \\ x_2 & y_2 & z_2 \\ x_3 & y_3 & z_3 \end{array}$$

require that you keep in mind nine equations at a time. That is a heavy burden and relatively few men are able to do it. Here I have four coordinates, w , x , y , and z , and the variables:

$$\begin{array}{cccc} W_{11} & X_{11} & Y_{11} & Z_{11} \\ W_{12} & X_{12} & Y_{12} & Z_{12} \\ W_{13} & X_{13} & Y_{13} & Z_{13} \\ W_{14} & X_{14} & Y_{14} & Z_{14} \end{array}$$

and requiring that I carry in my mind sixteen equations at one time. That may seem impossible, but I've drilled myself at it for two years, and gradually I was able to go farther and farther——"

"But there are other quantities here," Sheila interrupted, studying the paper intently, "that do not belong in equations for the rotation of coordinates. They look like the integrals in electromagnetic equations."

"Good for you!" Heeger cried enthusiastically. "That pretty little head has something on the inside, too. That is just exactly what they are: electromagnetic integrals. You see, the rotation of coordinates looks very pretty in theory, but when you look it up with a little practical dynamo—don't you understand yet?"

Sheila stared at the young mathematician in questioning wonder.

"Sheila, please, you're just irresistible that way. I can't help it." He gathered her in his arms and kissed her face in a dozen places. She pushed him away.

"No more until you tell me what this is about. I mean it!" She stamped her foot, but a merry smile contradicted her stern frown.

"You're just like your father when you're like that," he said, taking up the papers again. "Very simple little conception," he continued. "Why be satisfied with rotating coordinates on paper? Here's a way to rotate them in concrete, physical reality."

"Listen now. When you rotate two coordinates through ninety degrees, you have an infinite where there previously was an absolute. If you rotate three coordinates through ninety degrees, you can make a vertical plane occupy a horizontal position. Now—suppose you rotate four coordinates through forty-five degrees: you can then make a portion of space occupy a new position, outside of what we know as space. And we can bring into this space of ours a portion of the unknown space along the fourth coordinate——"

"The fourth dimension?" gasped Sheila.

"There it is on paper. But we're going to do it in reality. There——" pointing across the room—"are the coils by means of which we can rotate some real space. I want you to see the preliminary trial. As I do not know just exactly what may happen, I am going to rotate only a small portion to begin with."

Sheila's eyes gleamed with excited comprehension.

"Call father in. He's just across the corridor——"

"Not for the very first trial. I want you to see that alone. After we know what it will do——"

"But it may be dangerous. Something may happen!"

"You think it might injure the furniture or damage the building? For the preliminary trial I shall rotate it only for an instant and turn it back instantly."

She clung to his arm nervously while he grasped the black handle of the switch and threw it down, waited a few seconds, and pulled it out again.

They saw nothing. There was a crash, instantaneously loud, and fading almost instantly to a distant, muffled rumble, and ceasing suddenly. There was a heavy thud and a pounding on the floor. Sheila gave a little scream.

There in front of them was a rapidly moving object, it bounced up and down off the floor to a height of three feet about once a second. It did not have the harmonic motion of a bouncing body, however; it stopped abruptly up in the air and shot downward at high speed, but the floor, stopped a moment and shot back upward. Then it stopped suddenly and hung in the air. It was about the size of a large watermelon, and looked for all the world like human skin smooth, uniform, unbroken all around.

The two stared at it amazed. Henry walked up and touched it with the tip of a finger. It grew smaller. And suddenly it decreased to about one-half its former size, retaining its surface smoothness and uniformity unchanged.

It had felt soft and warm, like human flesh.

Now it was increasing in size again, while they stared gaping, speechless, at it. When it stopped growing suddenly, it was the size of a big barrel, with rounded ends. There was a bulging ridge around the middle, on each side of which was a dark brown strap of something like leather. The rest of it was just naked skin.

Sheila and Henry stood rooted to the spot, staring at it and at each other. What was the thing? Where had it come from?

The Thing began thumping up and down off the floor again, with great, thudding shocks. After a while it dwelted and lay still. It was a most unorthodox, hideous looking thing, a great lump of naked flesh with two straps around it. It looked for all the world like some huge tumor in a medical museum, or like some monstrosity of birth. Could it be alive?

Both of them approached it cautiously. Henry pricked it with a pin. The skin was tough and he jabbed hard. A drop of blood appeared.

Then there was a terrible exclamation. The object decreased in size to a small sphere like a baseball. In fact, there were several baseball-sized lumps of flesh all around, just naked flesh. They moved rapidly, and two of them were between him and Sheila. Two or three were on the far side of her. He counted ten of them altogether. Five of them closed swiftly around her. Then she was gone!

Her scream, cut suddenly short, still rang in his ears. And she was gone! Suddenly vanished from in front of him! He groped about, feeling for her in the empty air, but there was nothing anywhere. There lay the watermelon-like lump of flesh that he had first seen. It was on the floor and lay quite still. And she was gone! He held his head distractedly.

The door opened and Professor Mathers, Sheila's father, came in. "What's going on here?" he demanded, blinking his eyes.

Heagy stared blankly, trying to think.

"That thumping and screaming?" the professor continued.

"I think I begin to understand," Heagy began.

"Thank you understand!" the professor shouted. "What have you done to my daughter? She doesn't scream for nothing."

He caught sight of the avoid lump of flesh. He turned pale and stopped as if frozen. Some terrible thought crossed his mind, connecting it with his daughter; had some nefarious experiment turned her into that thing?

"What's that?" he snapped savagely.

"Something's got to be done," Heagy said, chiefly to himself. "We've got to bring her back here. I'm afraid to manipulate the thing too many times; the Lord only knows what else it may do up."

The professor glared.

"You sound like a first-rate manic-depressive crazy man——"

"Wait till I shut that thing up," Heagy said, getting a hold on himself, "and I'll explain all I know about this. I was getting ready to try to rotate a dog out of space, and so I have a new, strong dog-cage here."

He set the dog-cage down beside the lump of flesh, very gently, very slowly, he pushed it in. His touch recoiled at the warm, soft feel of it, but he got it into the cage and locked the door. Then he set out a chair for the professor, but his hand shook, for his mind was on Sheila.

He sat down facing the professor, his back to the cage. Suddenly the professor's face fell, and his eyes stared ahead with a look of utter blankness. Heagy whirled around and looked at his "specimen." It was out of the cage!

There hadn't been a sound. His eyes had not been off it for ten seconds. The cage was still locked. There it lay, there feet away from the cage, only it wasn't the same. There were two pieces of it now, long, cylindrical, rounded at the ends. Like a couple of legs without knees or feet. Heagy got up and unlocked the cage, noting that it required fifteen seconds. He felt around inside the cage with his hands, but found nothing.

"After all," he sighed, "it is very simple."

The professor stared at him, now thoroughly convinced that he was

cray, Heagy explained about his sixteen equations and how readily they interlocked with the electromagnetic integrals, and of how the very simple application of any form of electromagnetic energy would rotate four coordinates.

"I wanted her to see the preliminary experiment. I used but little power on a small field. Just opened a little trap-door into space, so to speak. There is only one explanation for what has happened here. I rotated a portion of a fourth dimension, and left a hole in hyperspace for an instant. Just as if you rotate up a portion of this floor, there will be a hole left. As chance would have it, just at that moment some inhabitant of hyperspace came along and stumbled into it, and I swung back on him and caught him.

"There he is, stuck. What we see and feel is a cross-section of him, a solid cross-section of that part of him that is cut by our three-dimensional space. See! If I stick my finger through this sheet of paper, the two-dimensional inhabitants on its surface will perceive only a circle. At first the nail occupies a portion of its circumference; as I push my finger on through, the nail is gone, and folds and ridges appear and disappear. If my whole hand goes through, the circle increases greatly in size. If they draw a circle around my finger and try to imprison it, I can withdraw it and stick it through somewhere else, and they cannot understand how it was done—

"But what about Sheila? Where is she?"

Heagy's face dropped. He had been full of interest and exultation in his problem. The reminder of her was an icy shock.

"There is only one possible conclusion," he went on in a dead voice. "The shuffles of the fourth-dimensional creature swept her out into hyperspace."

The professor sprang up and walked rapidly out of the room. There was something determined in his stride. He slammed the door. Heagy sat down and thought. Somehow he must rescue Sheila.

How could it be done? Should he try the rotation again? He had all the figures and could repeat it accurately. But, that would not be at all certain to get her back. The captured fourth-dimensional creature might get away. Heagy didn't want to lose him. Not only that he wanted to study him, but somehow he felt that he must hang on to the only link with that world where Sheila was now lost.

The thought of its getting away worried him. How could he make sure that it would not escape? He reasoned back to the plane section of a three-dimensional object. Enclosing it in a circle would do no good. But, if tied tightly with a circle of rope, it might be kept from moving up and down. Analogically, if he could get this thing into some sort of a tight bag, he might feel free to flip his trap-door once more. Ah! then came the brilliant idea!

He could sally out into hyperspace and look for Sheila!

He got the lump of flesh fastened up tight in a canvas sack and lashed the other end of the stout rope with which he tied it around a concrete pillar. Then the door opened and two policemen walked in, followed by the professor. He was urging them on. "There he is! Grab him!" he seemed to say in attitude and gesture, though not in words.

A pang of alarm shot through Heagry. He was needed right here to rescue Sheila. What would become of her if they lashed him up? His mind as usual worked quickly and logically, in contradistinction to the professor's, who seemed to have been thrown into an unreasoning rage by his daughter's disappearance. He sprang to her switch-board and shouted:

"Stop!"

Something in his determined attitude alarmed the policemen, his hand on the controls-looking apparatus might mean something. They stopped.

"What's this? What do you want?" Heagry demanded.

The professor's torrents broke loose.

"He murdered my daughter. Made away with her. I've got a warrant for his arrest. Nonsense! Twaddle about the fourth dimension. Prosecute him to the hilt, that's what I'll do. Been hanging around her too much. He's crazy. Throw him in jail. Make him bring her back!"

Heagry laughed a desperate laugh, which made the other three more certain that he was a dangerous maniac.

"Like throwing debris into jail," Heagry decided acidly. "The chance of paying the debt there! Move another step and I'll throw the three of you into unknown hyperspace."

They were all afraid, if they knew not what. Heagry outlined to them that he wanted to go out into hyperspace and search for Sheila. But he would tie himself on a rope fastened at this end. And he wanted someone here at this end, who was friendly to him, to manage things. He telephoned out for a rope and for two of his students. The policemen watched, too puzzled to know what to do. The professor acquiesced, more from fear, like a man at the point of a gun, than because he saw the reason of it.

The rope was delivered and the two students, Adkins and Bremer, arrived. They helped him fix a firm sling around his shoulders, waist, and thighs. The loose rope was coiled up on the floor several hundred feet of it, and the other end tied to a concrete pillar. There was some amazed staring by the students at the swiveling thing in the canvas sack.

"I'll tell you about that later," Heagry said. "All the pointers and dials are set. All you need to do is to throw this switch and jerk it back at once. Adkins, you do that; and, Bremer, you watch the rope.

"When I signal by jerking it six times, Adkins, you throw the switch again the same way."

That was all. Without another word Adkins threw the switch. There was the same crash, instantaneously muffled and almost suddenly fading away as at a distance. There was a momentary sensation of agitation, though nothing really moved.

Beagry was gone. The loose end of the rope that had tied him lay on the floor. It was certainly a breathless thing. The professor stared with a sort of vacant expression on his face, as though the solid ground had suddenly dropped from beneath his feet. It dawned upon him that perhaps Sheila had really disappeared that way.

Beemer picked up the end of the rope. It was not an end, it merely looked that way. There was a strong tension on it, in fact it soon began to slip through his hands, and end after end was drawn off the pile on the floor, and simply vanished. For a while it stopped and then went on unwinding.

The policemen gazed blankly. They were unable to understand what had happened. The man they were to arrest had suddenly melted from sight. They mumbled stammered monosyllables to each other. But they were not as astonished as was Professor Mathers. They did not grasp the enormity of what was going on, as he did. It upset his whole mental universe. He sat a while and then paced nervously up and down the vast room. He came and looked at the rope. Then he looked at the canvas sack. The sack lay loose as though the contents had escaped. He felt of it and found that it contained three soft baseball-sized objects. He jumped back and shrank away from it. The time seemed interminable. He waited and waited.

Between an occasional murmur between the policemen or a short exclamation from Adkins or Beemer, there was no conversation. Beemer watched the rope closely. There was a tense nervous strain created largely by the professor's distracted movements. Then, after what seemed hours, though in reality less than one hour, there were six short tugs on the rope. Adkins threw his switch, and out of the crash and beemer Beagry tumbled out on the floor, all tangled up in coils of rope.

He was breathless, haggard, wild-eyed. He lay for a moment on the floor, panting. Then he sprang up and gazed fiercely, wildly about. He seemed suddenly to perceive where he was. An expression of relief came over his face, he sighed deeply and sank down to a sitting position. He looked exhausted, his clothes were disarranged and ripped in some places, and were covered with dust.

The five people looked at him in silent amazement. He looked from one to the other of them, it was a long time before he spoke.

"Good to be back here. I can hardly believe I'm really back. Never again for me."

"What about Sheila? Where is she?" the professor demanded.

Hungry recoiled as though from some shock. He sank again into profound depression. At first he had seemed a little happy to get back. Apparently Sheila had been forcibly driven out of his mind for the time.

"Let me tell you about it," he began slowly. He seemed not to know just how to proceed. "That is, if I can. I don't even know how to tell it. I know what it must feel like to go insane."

"I heard the switch go down as I gave Adams the signal. Then it seemed like an elevator starting, and that was all. Until I looked around."

"I was sitting on something that looked like rock or cement. Not far from me was that barrel-like lump of flesh with the two straps around it, just exactly as I had seen it in the laboratory. And then a row of shapes reaching into the dim, blue distance. The nearer ones seemed to be of concrete or cement. You've heard me jee at the crazy, cubistic and futuristic designs on book wrappers and wall-paper. Well, those are pleasant and harmonious compared with the dizzy, jagged angles, the irregular, zig-zag shapes with peaks and shafts, and everything out of sense and reason except perspective. Perspective was still correct. Just a long, straight row fading into the distance. What in the world it could be, I hadn't the faintest idea. However, I gradually reviewed it out."

"Naturally, since I am a three-dimensional organism, I can only perceive three dimensions. Even out in hyperspace I can only see three dimensions. What I saw must therefore be the spatial cross-section of some sort of buildings. I couldn't see the entire buildings, but merely the cross-section cut by the particular set of coordinates in which I was. Now it occurs to me, that since that barrel-like thing looked exactly the same to me out there as it did in the room here, I must have been in a 'space' or set of coordinates parallel to the ones we are in now."

"Imagine a two-dimensional being, whose life had been confined to a sheet of paper and who could only perceive in two dimensions, suddenly turned loose in a room. He could only see one plane at a time. Everything he saw would be cross-sections of things as we know them. Wouldn't he go crazy?" I nearly did.

"I first started out to walk along beside the row of rock-like shapes. Suddenly near me there appeared two spheres of flesh, just like this one we have here. They rapidly increased in size, coalesced into a barrel-shaped thing with a metal-web belt around the middle, and then disintegrated quickly, there were there or four smaller globes of stuff and then ten or a dozen little ones, finally an irregular, blotchy, melon-like thing which quickly disappeared. In fifteen seconds it had all materialized and gone."

"I was beginning to understand the stuff now. Merely some inhabitant or creature of hyperspace going by. As he passed through my particular spatial plane, I saw successive cross-sections of him. Just as though my body were passing through a plane, my feet first: first there would be two irregular circles, then a larger oval, the trunk, with two circles, the arms, at the sides and separate from it, and so on until the top of the head vanished as a small spot.

"I followed down the line of buildings, looking around. Bizarre shapes appeared around me, changing size and shape in the wildest, dizziest, most uncouth ways, splitting into a dozen pieces and coming together into large, irregular chunks. Some seemed to be metal or concrete, some human flesh, naked or clothed. In a few minutes my mind became accustomed to interpreting this passage of fourth-dimensional things through my 'plane' and I studied them with interest. Then I slipped and fell down. Down I whizzed for a while, and everything about me disappeared.

"I found myself rolling, and sitting up, I looked around again. There was nothing. I still seemed to be on cement or stone, and in all directions it stretched away endlessly into the distance. It was the most disconcerting thing I had ever seen in my life. I was just a speck in a universe of cement pavement. I began to get panicky, but controlled myself and started to walk, feeling the reassuring pull of the rope behind me. I walked nervously and saw nothing anywhere. Evidently I had slipped off my former 'plane' and gotten into a new one. The rope tightened suddenly, perhaps I had reached the end of it. It jerked me backwards and I swung dizzily, my feet hanging loose.

"I swung among millions of small spherical bodies disposed irregularly in all directions about me, even below. They moved gently back and forth in small arcs, and there were large brown bodies—

"Why go through it all? I stumbled from one spatial plane into another. Each seemed a totally different universe. I couldn't get them correlated in my mind into any kind of a consistent whole at all. For a long time I climbed over some huge metal framework, I ran into moving things that grew larger and disappeared; I struggled through a jungle of some soft, green, vegetable stuff. Just all of a sudden I made up my mind that I'd never find Sheila.

"She might be within a foot of me all the time, yet I couldn't get to her, because I couldn't see out of three dimensions. I yelled her name until I was hoarse and my head throbbled, but nothing happened. I grew panicky and decided I wanted to go back. I pulled on the rope and dragged myself toward the direction from which it came, sometimes I slid rapidly toward it, at others I could feel myself dragging my entire weight with my arms. Then I could go no further, pull as I might. It seemed like trying to reach an inch higher

than you really can, I couldn't quite stretch that far. So I gave it six short hugs. Very quietly I tumbled out here. I haven't seen Sheila."

The professor was calm. His face was set hard.

"Either you're telling the truth or you're insane as a loon," he said, and his voice was puzzled and sincere. "Perhaps I'm crazy, too. I'm broad-minded enough to admit that is possible. I've got you charged with murder. But I'll give you a chance. What are you going to do about Sheila?"

Hesgry's eyes blazed.

"You can go to hell with your chance," he roared. "I want Sheila back worse than you do. If anyone can get her back, it is myself. If you interfere, you simply guarantee that she's lost, that's all. If you want to see her again, keep your hands off! See!"

The professor was a better man than his blustering actions might lead one to think.

"Well, I'm worried," he said shortly. "Can I help you any?"

Hesgry never changed expression.

"Perhaps you can. I may need more money than I've got. Just now you can help me most by getting out of here and taking everybody with you and letting me think. I've got an idea. I'll phone you when I want something."

"Well, remember you're charged with murder, and there will be a police guard around this place."

How great and yet how small men will be under trying conditions!

Hesgry, left alone, sat and thought. He jumped up and ran his hands through his hair.

"God! Think of it!" he gasped. "Sheila out there alone! In that mad place! Not even a rope!"

He paced rapidly around the room. Then he seized paper and pencil and began to draw. He drew circles and ellipsoids of different sizes and laid the drawings in a row. The professor came in an hour later and found him at it.

"How do you ever expect to find her that way?" he growled peevishly.

"Shut up!" Hesgry snapped, his nerves tensed into disrespect. He swept up the papers with his hand and crumpled them into the waste-basket. "No use. Can't study four-dimensional stuff on a two-dimensional plane. Say!" he shouted roughly at the professor, "get me a hundred pounds of modeling clay up here. Quick as you can!"

The professor trotted out after it without a word, much less with any understanding of what it was about.

"Do you think you'll do it?" was his eager attitude one moment, and, "If you don't, you go on trial for murder," he raved a moment later.

Far into the night Hesgry worked with modeling clay, moulding the forms that had appeared in the laboratory and some of those he

had seen in hypnagogia. He tried to recollect the order in which the various shapes had appeared to him, and laid them in rows in that order. Late into the night he modeled and arranged and stared and studied. Near midnight the professor poked his head in the door.

"She's really gone," he moaned. "She hasn't come home. She's no-where!" He turned on the haggard Heagey. "The policemen are on the job, so don't try to get away. But I'm offering five thousand dollars to anyone who brings Sheila back."

Heagey snatched a few hours' sleep on the floor. In the morning when the professor opened the door, he was arranging clay balls and clubs into rows and staring at them. As soon as the professor's head appeared, he shouted:

"I've got it! The biggest photographs you can get of Sheila. Head and full-length both. And fast! Hurry!"

He now turned his attention to the object in the canvas sack. He untied the rope from the fourteen ounce duck, tied the corners of the canvas together, inserted a stout stick (obtained by breaking the leg off a chair), and twisted it, squeezing the small ball of flesh unmercifully. At first sight it was a cruel looking procedure, but there was method in it. The thing began to pump back and forth excitedly. He loosened the bulk of his pressure, but kept up a steady, firm tension. His strength was sufficient to hold it fairly steady. Suddenly he loosened all pressure. The mass of flesh suddenly grew larger and the satisfied expression in Heagey's face showed that was what he was working for. Just as when you push hard against someone and then suddenly let go, he falls toward you.

He persisted steadily along this line. When the cross-section increased in size he held it loosely, patted it gently, and even talked soothingly. As soon as it started to decrease, he screwed up his stick and beat down on it remorselessly. For an hour he worked. Then the professor entered with two 16 by 20 photographs taken out of frames.

"Wait!" shouted Heagey peremptorily. "Stand there and hold 'em." He twisted up his stick again, held it, and kneaded it; and was rewarded by seeing the barrel-shaped mass appear, then two long, cylindrical halves beside it, covered with metal-mesh.

"What's your idea?" the professor asked.

"Don't bother me!" Heagey panted irritatedly. "And don't move. I might need you any minute."

Finally the thing decreased in size again, but this time Heagey seemed satisfied with it. He removed the canvas sack. There was an irregular sphere the size of a bucket. Over its surface were queer patches, glassy places, and iridescent, rainbow like spots that changed color and looked deep.

"Quick now, the pictures!"

Heagey set up the pictures in front of the thing, as if to show them

to it. The professor stared at him as he would at a silly child. Heagy suddenly hit himself in the side of the head with his fist.

"What a prize fool! I keep on being a fool!" he shouted. He turned savagely to the professor.

"Get me the two best fellows out of the fine-arts department. Quick! Sculptors!"

If the professor thought Heagy was crazy, nevertheless some glimmer of hope of restoring Sheila lent him willingness and speed of thinking. He waddled rapidly into the telephone for a few minutes, repeating the word *emergency* several times. Then he started down the driveway, taking a policeman with him.

Heagy was feverishly busy. He seemed to be bringing every object in the room that could be conveniently carried, to sit before the monthly specimen he had there. He seemed to be showing it things. He acted for all the world like some ignorant, superstitious savage, bringing things to his god. Books, chairs, hats and coats, mathematical models, hammocks and wrenches, one thing after another, he held them up in front of it for a while and tossed them aside on the growing heap. When the two sculptors arrived, he barked his directions at them, and continued what seemed his silly efforts to entertain the object in front of him by showing it everything he could find. At least it remained quiet and unchanged.

The sculptors, infected with his determination, worked rapidly. First there was a model of a heavy, bulging man, with his foot caught in a hole like a coal-chute, and held fast by a square lid. Then from the pictures a model of Sheila, considering the speed with which it was made, it was a wonderful thing, with her pointed chin and curly hair all true to life. Then a rough model of Heagy.

Heagy set the models down in front of the iridescent, patchy Thing and played puppets with the models, went through a regular dramatic performance with them. The models of Sheila and himself stood near the man caught in the trap-door. The unpoisoned man struggled and knocked Sheila over and she rolled away, she fell down off the surface of the block to a lower level. The unpoisoned man continued to struggle, and the model of Heagy searched around, but could not get past the edge of the block.

Then, very impressively motioning toward the Thing, as though he really believed it was looking, Heagy made the model of the imprisoned man lean over and pick up Sheila, and hand her over to the model of himself. The model of himself held on to Sheila, and raised the trap-door that imprisoned the bulging man, who hopped out of the hole and hastened away. That was the little show that Heagy put on with the yard-high clay models.

The patchy sphere changed suddenly. First it shrank and then it

swelled, then there were three or four things moving back and forth. And suddenly, there stood Sheila!

Pale and distracted and when she looked, and she swayed as she looked blankly around. Then her eyes widened and she gave a little scream; but a look of peace and content spread over her features. By the time Heagy was at her side, she fell happily into his arms.

"One moment, dear," he said gently as he laid her down carefully in the arm-chair. The professor was down on the floor beside her in a moment, watching her fluttering eyelids.

"Dad?" she breathed. "I'm all right."

Heagy stepped quickly to his switcher and threw the big one in and out again. Again came the crash cut short, and the sensation of movement. And the Thing was gone. There was nothing left of it at all.

"Did you let the Thing go?" the professor reproved querulously.

"I had to," Heagy suggested. "It was a promise—for finding Sheila."

The professor was sitting on the floor, writing a check.

"Do you think you deserve this?" he said testily. He was merely trying to hide his emotion. "You won't get it until you prove it. Explain how you did this!"

Heagy dropped into a chair, looking exhausted to the limit.

"I reasoned from the things I saw Out There that this creature must be intelligent. There were buildings, machines, and leather and metal-working. So I made models and tried to deduce its shape. Somewhere on it there must be a head and eyes. You saw how I carved it 'through' this 'space' of ours until the head was cut by our 'space' and the eyes could see us. Then I told it what I wanted it to do with models—just as I would explain things to you by means of drawings on a sheet of paper.

"Now do you believe there are four dimensions?" Heagy demanded by way of vengeance.

"Yes. Do you?" the professor countered.

"Four? I'm convinced there are a dozen or a thousand dimensions!"

to it. The professor stared at him as he would at a silly child. Heagy suddenly hit himself in the side of the head with his fist.

"What a prize fool I keep on being a fool!" he shouted. He turned wearily to the professor:

"Get me the two best fellows out of the fine-arts department. Quick! Sculptors!"

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to fit the magical window into his odd room that it occurred to Mr. Shadden's mind that he did not want a window. And then they were at the door of the house in which he rented a room, and it seemed too late to explain.

The stranger demanded privacy while he fitted up the window, so Mr. Shadden remained outside the door at the top of a little flight of creaky stairs. He heard no sound of hammering.

And presently the strange old man came out with his faded yellow robe and his great beard, and his eyes on far off places. "It is finished," he said, and he and the young man parted. And whether he remained a spot of colour and animation in London, or whether he ever came again to Baghdad, and what dark hands kept on the circulation of his twenty-five anthesis, Mr. Shadden never knew.

Mr. Shadden entered the bare-boarded room in which he slept and spent all his Indian hours between closing-time and the hour at which Messrs. Morgan and Charter commenced. In the Tenates of so dingy a room his most frock-coat must have been a continual wonder. Mr. Shadden took it off and folded it carefully, and there was the old room's window rather high up in the wall. There had been no window in that wall hitherto, nor any ornament at all but a small cupboard, so when Mr. Shadden had put his frock-coat safely away he glanced through his new window. It was where his cupboard had been in which he kept his trawlings; they were all standing on the table now. When Mr. Shadden glanced through his new window it was late in a summer's evening, the butterflies some while ago would have closed their wings, though the bats would scarcely yet be drifting abroad—but this was in London: the shops were shut and street-lamps not yet lighted.

Mr. Shadden rubbed his eyes, then rubbed the window, and still he saw a sky of blazing blue, and far, far down beneath him, so that no sound came up from it or smoke of chimneys, a mediæval city set with towers. Brown roofs and cobble streets, and then white walls and battresses, and beyond them bright green fields and tiny streams. On the towers archers lolled, and along the walls were pikemen, and now and then a wagon went down some old-world street and lumbered through the gateway and out to the country, and now and then a wagon drove up to the city from the west that was rolling with evening over the fields. Sometimes folk put their heads out of lattice windows, sometimes some idle troubadours seemed to sing, and nobody hurried or troubled about anything. Any and dizzier though the distance was, for Mr. Shadden seemed higher above the city than any cathedral gargoyle, yet more clear detail he obtained as a dusk the banners floating from every tower over the idle archers had little golden dragons all over a pure white field.

He heard motor buses roar by his other window, he heard the newsboys howling

Mr. Sladden grew dreamier than ever after that on the premises in the establishment of Messrs. Morgan and Chater. But in one matter he was wise and watchful: he made continuous and careful inquiries about golden dragons on a white flag, and talked to no one of his wonderful window. He came to know the flags of every king in Europe, he even dabbled in history, he made inquiries at shops that understood heraldry, but nowhere could he learn any trace of little dragons or on a field argent. And when it seemed that for him alone those golden dragons had fluttered he came to love them as an exile in some desert might love the lilies of his home or as a sick man might love swallows when he cannot easily live to another spring.

As soon as Messrs. Morgan and Chater closed, Mr. Sladden used to go back to his dingy room and gaze through the wonderful window until it grew dark in the city and the guard would go with a lantern round the ramparts and the night came up like velvet, full of strange stars. Another clue he tried to obtain one night by putting down the shapes of the constellations, but this led him no further, for they were unlike any that shone upon either hemisphere.

Each day as soon as he woke he went first to the wonderful window, and there was the city, diminutive in the distance, all shining in the morning, and the golden dragons dancing in the sun, and the archers stretching themselves or swinging their arms on the tops of the windy towers. The window would not open, so that he never heard the songs that the troubadours sang down there beneath gilded balconies, he did not even hear the bellmen's chimes, though he saw the jackdaws unroofed every hour from their barns. And the first thing that he always did was to cast his eye round all the little towers that rose up from the ramparts to see that the little golden dragons were flying there on their flags. And when he saw them flapping themselves on white folds from every tower against the marvelous deep blue of the sky he closed contentedly and, taking one last look, went off to his work with a glory in his mind. It would have been difficult for the customers of Messrs. Morgan and Chater to guess the precise ambition of Mr. Sladden as he walked before them in his neat frock coat, it was that he might be a man-at-arms or an archer in order to fight for the little golden dragons that flew on a white flag for an unknown king in an inaccessible city. At first Mr. Sladden used to walk round and round the main street that he lived in, but he gained no clue from that, and soon he noticed that quite different winds blew below his wonderful window from those that blew on the other side of the house.

In August the evenings began to grow shorter, this was the very remark that the other employees made to him at the emporium, so that he almost feared that they suspected his secret, and he had much less time for the wonderful window, for lights were few down there and they blinked out early.

One morning late in August, just before he went to Business, Mr. Shadden saw a company of pikemen running down the cobbled road towards the gateway of the mediaeval city—Golden Dragon City he used to call it alone in his own mind, but he never spoke of it to anyone. The next thing that he noticed was that the archers on the towers were talking a good deal together and were handling round bundles of arrows in addition to the quivers which they wore. Heads were thrust out of windows more than usual, a woman ran out and called some children indoors, a knight rode down the street, and then more pikemen appeared along the walls, and all the pebbles were in the air. In the street no troubadour sang. Mr. Shadden took one look along the towers to see that the flags were flying, and all the golden dragons were streaming in the wind. Then he had to go to Business. He took a bus back that evening and ran upstairs. Nothing seemed to be happening in Golden Dragon City except a crowd in the cobbled street that led down to the gateway, the archers seemed to be resting as usual lazily in their towers, then a white flag went down with all its golden dragons, he did not see at first that all the archers were dead. The crowd was pouring towards him, towards the precipitous wall from which he looked, men with a white flag covered with golden dragons were moving backwards slowly, men with another flag were pressing them, a flag on which there was one huge red bear. Another banner went down upon a tower. Then he saw it all, the golden dragons were being beaten—his little golden dragons. The men of the bear were coming under the window, whatever he threw from that height would fall with terrible force: fire-bricks, coal, his clock, whatever he had he would fight for his little golden dragons yet. A flame broke out from one of the towers and licked the feet of a reclining archer; he did not stir. And now the alien stalked was out of sight directly underneath. Mr. Shadden broke the panes of the wonderful window and wrenched away with a poker the lead that held them. Just as the glass broke he saw a banner covered with golden dragons fluttering still, and then as he drew back to hurl the poker there came to him the scent of mysterious spices, and there was nothing there, not even the daylight, for behind the fragments of the wonderful window was nothing but that small explosion in which he kept his tea-things.

And though Mr. Shadden is older now and knows more of the world, and even has a Business of his own, he has never been able to buy such another window, and has not ever since, either from books or men heard any rumour at all of Golden Dragon City.

Tiger Dust

by Russell Morgan

Russell Morgan's best known story is the remarkable "Lascaris," a tale of a sea serpent, of a scientist who braves storms and of a Chinaman who traded his human soul for that of the deep sea beast. "Lascaris" has been made available in other collections—but Russell Morgan's output was not restricted to that alone alone. "Tiger Dust" is explicit with the same tropical Asia background, with feeling for the ways of jungle-dwelling people, and with the potency of the oriental magic that only transforms a tiger from a beast to a thing of wonder. The story of a Malayan trap's vengeance is a fantastic classic reminiscent of those that Morgan's tropical tales.

WITH an order for Paradise birds to be shipped to a private collector, Dioren decided to see if any could be bought from Omar Sung Lee, a native dealer whose unscrupulous trickery had made all dealers wary of him and caused the captains of cargo boats to refuse to carry his trapped animals and loads. Dioren had been cheated by Omar Sung Lee in his early days of collecting but he had cut his eye teeth in the game and wiped off his score against the native dealer. He was on his guard, and with him went his chief trapper and right-hand man, Tom Bomke, big, devil-may-care Irishman, equally at home with the natives and white men in their gathering-places of Malayan.

Over a drink before they started, Bomke underscored the fact that he had taken a native wife.

"Faith, a man that might any day set his foot on the tail of a king cobra has no business to marry a nice white gal," he said. "Should I meet up wid a hungry tiger, my late wouldn't be good for her to contemplate. But native women understand their country an' its peculiar accidents. What's more, they have ways of avengin' a man just as white widows have accident insurance claims. There's a saying that where nature gives a poison the antidote is near by. Maybe 'tis true. But anyway I paid dear for a little golden native woman from the temple. She dances finely, an' she knows native magic. I hope you'll feel free to visit our bungalow any time, sir."

Time came when Dioren wished to God he had not bothered with the order for Paradise birds or met Bomke's native wife.

The cages in Omar Sang Lee's *kampung* were small and badly kept. The luckless prisoners drooped in merciless sun heat. Omar Sang Lee was a mongrel of bad ancestry despised by Malays and Chinese alike, and as Diacen stole his business by honest dealings, Omar Sang Lee went in for side show tricks. There was a two-headed eagle calf, an elephant with twenty instead of eighteen toes, sold for a high price from nabobs who considered them lucky, and in a cage two cobras joined by three-quarters of their length. Bourke spat with disgust as he looked at them.

"Fishes should be killed," he mentioned. "But Diacen, demand if these cobras look as if they was born that way! Look at the puckered scar between them."

Omar Sang Lee led them to a shallow pond where a small monkey lay along the sloping bank, its lower extremity in the water. Diacen crouched as he gazed. Instead of legs the tail of a fish was joined to its legs! Agony burned in its eyes. It watched as a boy from Omar offered and a Chinese attendant forced a tablet down its throat, which seemed to relieve its pain. It would not live long, but Omar Sang Lee tried hard to make Diacen buy it while it lived.

Oriental connoisseurs are full of immortal monkey bodies joined to dried fish tails, the "miraculous" of commerce, but Diacen realized some hellishly ingenious master surgeon had attempted this revolting living experiment. Bourke's nerves were laid. His hand went to his pocket and the setting sunlight shone on a small black revolver in his hand.

"In of two minds whether to shoot you or the monkey," he said to Omar Sang Lee, who backed away from the belligerent Englishman and mumbled out an order. The Chinese darted to a cage and howled a warning. From the open cage door swung the head of a tiger.

Omar was running to the house and the two white men followed. Diacen knew that trick of Omar's to frighten visitors by the peril of a tiger on the loose and gauge curshaws from them. But this time the Chinese was having trouble jamming the cage door on the tiger's neck to force him back into the cage. The beast had a foreleg outside the bars. They heard the wooden rods splinter and the tiger leaped down, letting out roars of defiance. The Chinese fled for cover and Omar cursed as the tiger closed the *kampung* fence at one bound.

Shrieks of frightened villagers stifled through the heated silence, but Omar marked commands and the coolies opened the *kampung* gates and wheeled the tiger's cage across the opening. Then Omar took a small sack from his turban folds and loosed the puckered string.

In the sun-baked emptiness of the village road stalked the royal beast, staring at intervals. A native coming down the road measure of peril saw it and ran up the *kampung* fence in an incredible burst of agility and dived over. Bourke chuckled. But Omar went into the road and forced a little powder from the pouch in his hand. The tiger

crouched with lashing tail, ready to spring, took a crawling step forward and sniffed the white powder. Instead of leaping, it began to lick the dust. Omar dribbled a line of white powder to the cage and the beast lapped and purred, rolling as it went along licking the powder to a few grains on the floor of the cage. The cage door was jammed shut, with a contented, purring tiger inside.

With a malignant snarl Omar turned to the two white men.

"My lord knows his master," he said.

"Will you sell me some of that powder?" asked Dinorn.

"No, Tum, it is my great secret," said Omar, drawing up the pouch string. An instant later Brouke's hand darted, snatched the pouch, and with his gun covering Omar's breast he nudged Dinorn to go and backed out of the place with the curses and threats of Omar. Sung Loo shrieked after them.

"Curse don't worry me none," said Brouke. "But he's said 'em of a nature to blast my body now an' my soul hereafter."

No native showed a face to them in that otherwise friendly village as they plodded the hot road back to Soetabaya after a fruitless search for birds and with trouble hot on their heels for the theft of the tiger dust.

"I'll go get ye some birds," said Brouke. "It'd be as well fer me to get inbred anyway. Omar is lower than a cobra, but he's clever an' he's in with the worst kinds of undiluted Asiatic hellishness this side o' Sheel. Dinorn, some o' his Chinik surgeons joined them two cobras, sure as I live! I've heard o' graftin' fins on fish, but that monkey business makes a man sick inside. He's got smart surgeons on his staff, an' no laws o' God or man, heaven or hell to keep him in bounds. I'll give that tiger dust to my wife, who believes tigers have souls. She even says humans can change into tigers, an'—" Brouke launched into stories of were-tigers that lasted until they were back at the hotel, bathed and sipping cool drinks.

Next day Brouke departed for the interior after Paradise birds, and Dinorn waited. No word came for months and he grew worried and decided to call on Brouke's native wife in a village of the interior. He came after the heat of the day to a pretty bungalow covered with white-colored bougainvillea, and coming up the path heard the soft notes of a native bell-gong and the croon of a love song which ceased as he drew near. Brouke's wife came to the porch clad in a silk sarong, her dark hair in a coil over one ear, a red flower over the other.

She was demure and pretty, but her dark eyes held the enigmatic look of coquetry arrested in full flush by tragedy. He had brought her a string of small seed pearls as a wedding gift, but dropping them into her hand made him feel as awkward as if he gave red-headed shippers to a nun. She spoke port English and he asked if she had heard from Brouke.

Dineen came from that interview with a chill in spite of the tropic heat. Undoubtedly Bourke's wife was true. Her passion for Bourke was apparent, her loyalty intense. She talked quietly, cautiously, but she said evil had befallen her man. She had heard him calling in agony yet warning her not to try to reach him. He was not dead, yet devils tormented him. He loved her, yet their life together was ended. He commanded her not to avenge him as love might prompt. Dineen realized that she accepted her loss with native philosophy but she was waiting to learn the mystery regarding Bourke and brooding vengeance in spite of his warning.

Dineen decided to march for his chief trapper, and Bourke's wife sent him a relative of her family named Inham who knew Bourke and was loyal to his wife. Inham gathered native carriers and supplies for the trip, one item of which surprised Dineen, a supply of thick long candles. Dineen reminded Inham that they had flashlights, but the natives said Bourke always carried "corpse candles," which in case of his death were to be lighted around his body. Bourke's wife added her gift for good luck, a treasured crucifix of Bourke's, finely carved of ebony and ivory wrapped in a length of silk, which Dineen placed in the box containing the "corpse-candles" and some canned and bottled delicacies for his own personal use.

Native carriers took them up shoreless rivers where mangrove pools ripen on branches and drop roots in banyan webs bedded in the earth. Crocodiles rested their upturned jaws on the roots, and small water birds flew in and out taking food particles from their lungs. The country swarmed with small monkeys that scattered when a big orang-utang would come along and peer curiously at the canoes. Dineen noticed his natives were nervous from the start, and their fears affected him. But there were compensations for the discomforts of insects and leeches and guarding against the swinging tails of crocodiles. The mountain peaks were mist-wreathed, the wooded jungles held orchids like tinted flames. Birds of Paradise danced on upper tree branches at sunrise. There were flashes of gaudy parrots and butterflies like wind-blown bits of gay silks.

They found a blazed trail where Bourke had cut his way inland. But the irritating thing to Dineen was the constant tattering toll and stuttering of native drums talking back and forth.

Inham, who understood the drum gas-ups, was worried. The other natives wanted to turn back, but there is a penalty for deserting a white man in the jungle, also. Inham held over them the fear of vengeance from Bourke's wife, who had a definite reputation as a sorceress.

Leaving the canoes, they went through saw-edged jungle grass, plagued by leeches and stinging insects. Around the evening camp-fire the men picked off leeches and polished their joints, which are

chains against evil. The villagers met with were friendly and they remembered Romke going through, but refused to furnish guides. "There are devil-devils," they said.

Inham translated, but Dineen did not mind. There was a tangible apprehension in his own mind, a feeling of weird things going forward in the jungle. He decided that a rest from the laborious travelling and a little hunting might cheer the men. Birds were plentiful. So at the foot of a hill range standing like the vertebrae of a monster that had fossilized as it crawled seaward, they made camp.

Dineen's personal supplies were kept in a hut they built on high stiff legs. He was sitting in the doorway one afternoon when he saw a huge orang-utang standing in the crotch of a near-by tree holding the branches apart and peering down. Inham also saw it and silently handed up a gun to Dineen's hand. Instantly the branches crashed together, the ape fled, and the swash of other branches springing back as it leaped from one to another told of its size and weight.

That night the native drums were livelier. Inham went to the nearest village and returned late with a tale that kept Dineen awake longer than usual. He said a native girl had been carried into the jungle by one of the orang-utangs. The villagers were mourning her loss and talking about terrible magic in the hills. Inham's own tale was interrupted as he ceased speaking and pointed toward the tree, and in the moonlight Dineen saw again an orang-utang with its tangs bared as if it grinned. There came a bellow from that hairy throat which sent the men lying around the small campfires scuttling toward the hut, their curved knives ready for defense.

The big ape stood on a branch balanced by its hand-grip on a higher limb and from its black lips came sounds so smooth that Dineen felt the hair prickling on the nape of his neck. He could have sworn he heard the creature mouth words:

"By, Tuan, by . . ." which means "It is true, Tuan."

A silence bred of fear held Dineen mute. Slowly and laboriously the great ape mouthed sounds like Malay words. The natives huddled together, whispering in terror. At Dineen's ear Inham breathed:

"He says 'orang patok abot,' Tuan. He wants white man medicine. What devil is it that gives speech to a man of the woods, Tuan?"

"That is foolish talk," said Dineen stubbornly. "Tuan wits wander. Get the express rifle." But at sight of Dineen with the elephant gun in his hand, the ape disappeared.

Below the hut the natives were chattering in frenzied outbursts and Dineen knew they were ready to bolt.

"It is an ape that somebody has trained and taught to speak," he said, knowing it was folly to contradict their belief that the creature had used their own speech. He did not yet believe it, and his men needed to be handled carefully lest they desert him now.

That night the drums spoke in jangling sports and dances with beating sometimes into violent thrashing, and his men lay awake whispering. At dawn they pleaded to leave this evil place. Duncen was one white man among a crowd of savages almost uncontrollable from superstitious fear. He started them playing hard-line on sticks to lodge in the trees and building cages on tall poles beyond the reach of snakes, then he led them into the jungle to hunt.

That night in camp, while supper was cooking, he sat cleaning off leeches that had penetrated his puttees and faced boots, and decided to open canned peaches for a treat. He pulled the lid with his clothing iron under the camp bed and peeped for the other case. Then Duncen cursed. The case of precious canned food was gone, and with it the candles and candles packed among the bottles. He did not suspect a thief among his own men, yet around the hut lay his shaving tackle, weapons and ammunition, for more appealing to a native from the village, left undisturbed. He searched further, then called Ithum, who had discovered that a sack of rice was missing also. The sack had been punctured and rice had trickled from the hole as it was carried away.

At dawn they saw birds alighting to feed on the rice. Duncen marked their swooping flight toward a shadowy crevice in the hills.

"We'll follow the thief," he announced.

With a few picked men and Ithum he started across the valley and camped near the hills that night. He was awakened from sleep beside the campfire by a sound that hit his hair. The light of dying embers showed his men crouching or creeping toward him. From the caves of gloom beyond the dim far glow came a humming voice like a minor tune played on the hard notes of an ancient organ. No human throat could have emitted its rumbling sonority. Ithum touched Duncen's arm and his teeth shattered as he whispered:

"Tum, the man of the words sings a mating-song that I have sung to women. It is a devil!"

"I've heard that damned ditty," agreed Duncen. Yet fear clawed at his brain. Cold sweat broke from his pores. "It's that talking ape," he added.

"Yes, Tum. He is singing to the native girl he stole from the village," said Ithum.

There was a restless rustling of tree branches that told of more than one great ape in the vicinity. To Duncen's increasing horror there came a gusty burst of profanity in a voice as mighty as that of the tiger:

"Shut up ye damned brute. Quit yer singing love songs to what the Chink'll make o' that poor little native girl that ye stole an' dropped in their kampong. God! I could kill ye for doing that if it wouldn't be so hellish lonesome without yer bad company in my own misery."

The speech ended with a volley of oaths that should have blasted their victim; then came the reply in post Fulgii from the voice that had sung the psalm.

"Be not angry with thy servant, Then. Long have I followed you into the perils of trapping beasts and birds. Now I am trapped with you. Yet perhaps it was so written. Strange magic I have seen, yet never did I think to be caught by it. The spirit of my first woman entered into the body of a tigeress. Now my spirit has entered into the body of a man of the woods."

A word ended the venterian musings. Dineen pinched his own forearm until it hurt convincing himself that he was not dreaming. The crashing of tree branches ended the jungle poughy.

There was no more sleep for Dineen. At daybreak he led his men toward the purple gap in the hills and again camped at the edge of flat country bordering another crocodile-infested river. Leaving the men and supplies, Dineen and Isham went forward, poking their way through masses of creepers and rotting deadwood to the gloom of mangroves bordering the water. From one twisted root to another they stepped cautiously. The muggers slipped into the water and sank slowly, then blinking eyes staring upward, bubbles breaking where they sank. The stench of rotting vegetation and nauseating crocodile odor was thick and heavy. Then as Dineen peered up and down the dark stream he caught sight of a neat modern powerboat on the opposite side, moored to a tree. From where it lay, a trail had been hacked into the further jungle.

Small monkeys chattered and howled with sudden cries, a sign that orang-outangs were coming. At the sound of distant branches swishing Dineen tried to retrace his way to solid ground. Isham was younger and more agile and he left Dineen behind. Creepers cut off Dineen's sight of the native, when suddenly a great ape dropped and confronted the white man.

It stood erect, heavily huge and menacing. Dineen tried to shoot, but as he swung the gun to his shoulder it was wrenched from his grasp by a second orang-outang which hung by its paws from an overhead tree branch. His blood seemed to congeal in his flesh as the big ape came nearer, muttering unsmooth sounds that even in his terror Dineen could not refuse to understand.

"Dineen, ye don't know me," it said mournfully. "Ye don't know Boukie, an' I don't blame ye. Ye couldn't believe it's me in this awful shape. But it's true, Dineen. It's Boukie's brain in the head of an ape. That's what the Chinks did to me. Chuan Sung Lee's Chink surgeons played their hellish tricks on me an' my trapper, jist because I stole that tiger dust o' his. God! what a price for a man to pay."

Dineen felt his senses whirling, his legs wobbling. The stench of the crocodile swamp filled his throat and nostrils and vertigo clamped

its claws in his vitals. He tried to leap to the next tree-rot and his legs were paralyzed like a man in a nightmare trying to escape from demons. He stumbled and fell across a mangrove root with his legs in the stinking ooze.

The giant ape came nearer, a paw reached for him. He was lifted close to that terrible face. Then he knew nothing more until his eyes opened on a leafy canopy of cool shade and cleaner wind. It was some minutes before he saw the great apes crouching near him and realized that he lay on a platform of bamboo crudely lashed to branches high in the trees, which swayed gently as the apes moved and shifted their weight.

"Dineen," came the rasping and thick sounds from a tongue that was slowly accustoming itself to human speech, "It's Bourke talkin'! God! I don't blame ye for doubtin' what I say. But listen to what I'm sayin' an' try to understand. Here, take a swig o' this coconut milk." He whunged a nut on the tree branch and broke the shell.

Dineen's throat was parched and he drank eagerly, then as his head lifted he dropped it again on his arm, hoping to God he dreamed the sight before him. Yet the voice went on relentlessly.

"Dineen, I'm a sight to scare a man, I know, but listen. Omar Sung Loo's Chink surgeons have a kampong near here an' a nice little surgery. Tabak—that's my trapper as was, though he's an ape now same as I am—we walked into it innocent as babes. The Chinks was polite and give us food an' drinks. They was both doped, Dineen. An' then devils butchered us an' put our limbs into the heads of orang-outangs. They meant to ship us to Omar an' sell us as freaks, but we broke away. Omar owed me a grudge, an' you remember how he cursed me. He said he'd pay back, an' he did."

It took time for the slow and labored utterance to be voiced. Dineen listened helplessly, and something in that sorrowful wail penetrated past fear, which was his only sensation.

"Ye can't believe," murmured the ape, "but I'll show ye presently how true it is. My wife knows. I went there an' told her I was in a devil land an' could never come home to her again. I told her not to search for me. But I said if Omar Sung Loo came tiger-trapping in the jungles she might slip the word to the natives to let a tiger maul him to death. 'Tis a poor revenge but 'twill keep him from father-hellbushness. An' Dineen, I want your help now. My man, Tabak—the unbaptized son of a dut—stole a native girl an' handed her down to the kampong for this Chink surgeon to make him a sweetheart orang-outang. We stole her before the head wound healed, an' she's here on our tree-nest dyin' by inches. You've some skill with wounds, Dineen. Look at her an' see can ye do anything. I'd end it for her, only it's so damned lonesome, an' Tabak an' me would fight.

"Somehow I want to live to know Omar is dead first . . . if I can stand it that long."

Dineen lay shuddering, hearing but not heeding. The great ape lifted him with his back against the tree bole and pointed toward a female ape that sat slumped in a heap as native women sit, its body leaning forward between its upthrust knees. Around its head was a pink powdered scar like the edge of a cap. One look at the scar revealed to Dineen the badly infected state. His dread-filled eyes gazed at the other apes and saw the healed scars around their heads. A burst of insane laughter came from his lips.

"It's tough on ye, Dineen, but you're safe with us, if that's any comfort. Tell me about the ape-girl."

"That wound needs surgical attention and disinfectants," he muttered hoarsely.

"We got none, but there's plenty in the Chinese' kaispong. You know drugs better'n I do. I'll take ye along."

"I won't go!" Dineen protested, but his resistance was feeble. The big ape was ruthless. Dineen saw that the ape body and instincts were not wholly controlled by the human brain, and Burke had been a bold hunter, cruel enough when his work demanded. Dineen was slung over his shoulder like a sack, carried in swinging flight that swooped from branch to tree. To save the lashing of branches on his face he ducked his head against the hairy breast and shut his eyes. Presently he must awaken from this devil dream. . . .

There was a glimpse of dark water as the apes leaped and caught branches on the opposite shore, then he saw sun gleams on a bamboo palisade and thatched buildings like large huts. From high in the tree Dineen looked down and saw humans. His first thought was of escape.

Gathering all his strength in a desperate effort he heaved suddenly against the ape's grasp. Then he was falling, skidding through thick-foliaged branches, dropping to the ground inside the stockade. He heard the hellow of the apes and gun-shots crashing. Opening his eyes later he saw a Chinese walking beside him as coolies carried him to the hut. He also saw three tame-oxgangs chained to trees in the kaispong, leaping the length of their fetters, yelling horribly. The Chinese lashed at them with a whip in his hand, and they cowered whimpering. A fourth ape slumped between its knees like the she-ape in the tree cypress. Then heads were swathed in bandages, their four paws manacled.

Dineen was glad to lie on a cot on the hut porch behind mosquito netting and drink what was handed him. The Chinese spoke excellent English, but as Dineen eased the nightmare through which he was enduring so dreadfully, there came further horror.

"It is neither fever nor a dream," said the Chinese. "Those apes have human brains. We experimented long ago in that branch of

surgery. My countrymen were adepts at grafting when your Western colleges were being built. Recently we have studied your work and gone ahead tremendously. Animals furnish our greatest field of experimentation. You have seen some poor specimens in the cages of Quar Sung I on's kamping. He has a market for side-show freaks. We hope he will be able to sell the talking apes which we have successfully produced. It has been possible for us to transplant human brains into the skulls of orang-outangs and have them survive. But unfortunately our greatest prize, a man of your race, escaped with a Malay apeman. They brought me a native girl who was operated upon, but stole her before her wound healed. She may not survive, for such operations need care in treatment. Those men-apes you see in the kamping speak no English and will not be so valuable for educational purposes in European countries. So you see how grateful I am that Bonke, the man ape who captured you, dropped you here. I hope you will enjoy our hospitality until we can trap another orang-outang."

The sinister measure of the Chinese's words was some time penetrating Dineen's mind. He was given highly spiced curry and cool drinks, which he ate and drank gratefully. Then he slept and awakened behind the mosquito-netting of the cot in a contented lethargy only disturbed by the clanking chains and hoarse cries of the ape prisoners.

A cook led him to a bath house and handed him fresh pajamas, comforting and cool to his flesh. He was enjoying the rest, the well-seasoned food and drinks. His body and brain were still too exhausted to anticipate danger or defend himself against it. Except for the chained apes, the place was quiet and deserted yet the jungle seemed nearer than usual by day, beyond the bamboo fence.

He rose and shuffled toward the fence, but two natives appeared armed with ugly-looking knives and herded him ignominiously back to the porch, where one stood guard while the other summoned the Chinese surgeon.

Coursems of speech yet blindly cruel, the surgeon ordered Dineen move fully to the fence awaiting him.

"You must not leave the fence."

Anger of the white man toward the Oriental stoicism roused Dineen's rage.

"I'll go where I damn please," he cried. "And you'll stop me at your peril. My men are not far away, remember."

"They cannot enter here," said the Chinese. "Nor are you free to leave, Dineen. I could not part with an fortunate a guest for the experiment I have in view, your own intelligent, trained and educated brain. I lost Bonke, but I shall not risk losing you. Better have another drink. Mr. Dineen, to quiet your nerves."

"Not another drop," shouted Dineen. "I believe you doped my drinks."

"Of course, both your food and drink were doped, as you call it. But is it not better to meet fate which even the bravest man puts off as long as he can, the transition from one existence to another form of life? Think it over. I must attend to that suffering ape in the kampong."

Slowly, frightfully, the ghastly truth dawned in his mind. He sat in a hell of elastic and focused fear, and when the drink was brought he struck it from the man's hand. He was unarmed, helpless, even his clothes were gone, except the cotton pajamas in which he sat. His body shuddered as he realized the Finnish surgeon fully intended to make an ape of him! Chattering fear took him down the steps to where the Chinese bent over the chained ape, but two Malays dogged his steps and stood beside him as he began to plead against the fate in store for him.

The end came suddenly. From the trees dropped a cyclonic fury of fighting apes, howling their rage, knocking the Malays aside, seizing them by the feet and swinging their heads against the palms, breaking their skulls like egg-shells. Dinsen turned from the sight of the surgeon being torn to shreds. Then he was caught over the shoulder of an ape and swung to the trees, the guttural Malay of Tabuk in his ears. The ape-man Rourke was gathering up the surgical instruments, bottles of medicine and rolls of gauze.

A hell of sobe, shrieking, moaning, screaming, rang in Dinsen's ears until he was carried to the tree platform. The height above ground made him crouch low beside the she-ape which lay limp on its side. When the case of instruments and drugs was thumped down beside him Dinsen touched the she-ape's body. He sat back on his heels and shook his head.

"She is dead," he said.

In the swaying aerial perch he felt haunted after the fright in his mind and dim of the light. He watched dully as the ape-men picked up the dead orang-outang and lowered her body to the thicket of lianas below, where they vanished. He was alone in the tree as night fell and the powers of darkness began their mysterious rustlings, the insect click and clatter arose. He slept and awakened as the Scorpion crawled down the sky and the Southern Cross was dimmed by dawnlight.

He shrank from an attempt to descend, but thirst tortured so badly that summoning his courage he swung from the platform to the nearest branch, and working his way by the tree crochets he reached the protruding root-bases and got to solid ground. He drank from moisture of night dew cupped in leaves, and followed a well-defined trail to higher ground. His men had fled, leaving the cold ashes of a campfire to mark the place where they had been. All day he traveled, following their trail, and at dark he saw small lights flickering against

a hill. With a fresh burst of speed he hurried on, then halted. Against the little flames he saw the grotesque figures of the two ape-men.

He would not risk being their prisoner again, and he circled cautiously along a hill slope to a rock from which he could look down. And the fear and repulsion of the unnatural beasts left him as he gazed upon their work. There was a hole scooped from the earth, and in it lay the body of the she-ape with the ivory and ebony crucifix stolen from his camp hut, on her breast. Around the grave stood his stolen candles, their flames wavering in the soft night breeze. Beside the grave the ape man Tabak sat crooning that Malay pantom, the love song issued in the night. Duncen remembered that it was the same song he had heard Bourke's native wife singing to the accompaniment of bell-gongs as he went up the path to her hutslow. The voice of Bourke, minutely aware of its volume, came to him sorrowfully.

"Corpse-candles don't mean much to her, Tabak, but maybe it'll help her soul find its way home. God help me! I wonder if this purgatory I'm going through will be enough for me to find heaven."

The cool night breeze was clearing Duncen's head of the things he had inhaled in the hanging fog. He remembered all that had happened, and even believed it now. Yet exhaustion forced him to lie and sleep on the rocky left. The breath which had bled him freely by day dropped from his flesh at night. A feeling of fatalism dulled further fear. He was forced from sleep by a touch on his arm, and the sight of the ape squatting on a hill was no longer frightening.

"Duncen, I'll be taken' ye to yer camp. Go out with your men. There's nothing you can do but me except kill me, mak is maybe you'd see my wife an' tell her to go back to her people an' forget me. There's nothing for her to hope. We was happy while it lasted."

Duncen was cured swiftly, not caring where, and dropped on the opening of the hill on a rock into the valley, high enough to look down on his own camp.

"Put him there, Tabak," said the other ape, who carried the gun that had been with him from Duncen when he met them at the river. "Duncen, when ye get out say a prayer for the soul o' Tom Bourke. He's had hell enough alive. There can't be worse hell when he's gone." The wailing voice held tragic sorrow and despair.

Duncen plunged down the trail. The sound of a shot startled him and he looked back. On the rock ledge one ape watched in death agony a moment, then flung its body fell from the ledge. Duncen heard it crash in the bushes.

Then the other ape squatted and hoisted the gun between its feet and placed the muzzle between its open jaws. Its hand reached down the gun-barrel to find the trigger. There was a second report. An inert mass of hair-covered body slumped from sight. Duncen ran on.

Exhausted, speechless, Dineen came to his camp bleeding from lacerations, his feet cut and gashed, his face gray and grim. He gave the command to go out and fell into Ibban's arms. They carried him in a hammock to the dark river and canoe. Repentant over deserting him, Ibban made that trip comfortable and brought him to the house of Bourke's native wife.

For days he lay, nursed by native women, drinking the bitter herb tea that combats fever, his body massaged with scented unguents, his appetite tempted with delicacies. Bourke's wife asked no questions but Ibban called daily and talked with her for hours. Dineen knew that she heard from Ibban what had happened in the jungle.

Her house was cool and pleasant, and in time she tried to amuse Dineen with her dances, her body sheathed in glittering metal cloth sewn with little mirrors. She crooned songs and tapped the soft-voiced bells, and one night she began the low pantan he had heard roared from the voice of an ape-man in the jungle. Dineen started up from his couch protesting.

"Not that song," he cried against.

"No!" she asked, her hands still stroking chains from the bell-gong. "It is the song I sang to my men in the night, Tuan. A song he loved. And it is time I was doing what must be done."

"What must you do?" he asked.

"Tuan, the curury that tortured him must die. Ibban has told me much, and you shouted much in the fever which tortured you. Omar Sung Lap shall not continue his evil magic and fill the jungle with fear. Her small body seemed to grow in height and dignity. Her soft eyes were black fire.

Dineen protested very little. No white man can argue a native from a blood feud, and Dineen had no pity for Omar Sung Lap or the surgeons who provided his cages with artificial breaks.

With a crash of her hands on the bell-gong, Bourke's wife ran to her room and returned wrapped in a black sarong. She went from the house and did not return until just before dawn. She slept that day like a woman drugged, but the servants looked after Dineen. That night as they sat cross-legged at the tiny low table, she ate little, and again as the moon rose she went from the house. It was two days before she returned. Dineen was awakened by a sound and saw her swaying as she made her way through the house to her room.

Then for several days she stayed in the house and seemed to regain spirits that had been exhausted on those nights she was away. A week passed, and one day she said to Dineen:

"Tuan, word has been carried to Omar Sung Lap that there is good tiger-hunting near here. He is coming to trap them. But you must not leave the house while he is near."

A word chilled Dineen's flesh. It was evening, with a red

moon like an old dishbowl rising behind the hills and tanning silver. The hot thick scent of flowers weighted the wind.

"I would like to see a tiger traplana," said Dreen.

"Yes, Tami"—her voice held a quivering substance of satisfaction like the purring of a cat—"but tigers take vengeance on innocent and guilty men alike. It will not be safe for you to be alone."

"How have you are," he said, "to spy the ways of the tiger boldly. Your people always speak of him as 'My Lord.'"

He saw her slow smile in the moonlight.

"Perhaps the Tami remembers the little bag of tiger dust my beloved took from the unmentionable Ornar Sung Lora. It is most rare. Besides, there are tigers and tigers. Most of them are stupid beasts intent only on feeding for existence. Has the Tami heard of the tiger *berhanta*?"

"Giant tigers!" he said. "I have heard. Bunker believed in them. I do not. Anyway, it happens I have never killed a tiger, so an spirit need take vengeance on me."

"Tami, it is not giant tigers you need fear. But you will give me the word of a white Tami that you will not leave my house until vengeance is accomplished!"

She swayed before him, sitting on her heels with her pretty head bent in supplication. He saw his pearls in a string around the creamy column of her throat. A queer fascination caught him as her head lifted and he looked into the black fire of her eyes, which slowly brightened until they were shining amber in the moonlighted porch. He was ready to grant her slightest wish, yet his mood was unaffected by her prettiness as a woman. She was no longer quite normal. He felt the burning desire of her vengeance toward Bunker's murderer as she rose and stood before him motionless, then spread her arms and bent her body as if dedicating herself to a mission.

She went from the house, but that night Dreen sat in a porch chair, dozing and waking until the dark hour before dawn, when in the night noises he heard another sound. Something crept stealthily nearer. The slanting moonlight showed a long shape stirring the flower hedge it came through. He saw a tiny body. Then to his horror it reared up on its hind legs, and the two forepaws and velvet-striped head of a tiger rose above the floor boards of the porch. He saw its shining green eyes, its bristling whiskers, its black muzzle and white fangs, the long claws clutched on the floor matting.

As he stared, the tiger head changed. Like breath blown on hot metal it was melted and blurred. Before his terrified gaze the velvet stripes of the head fused into the black hair of Bunker's wife, leaving her sauber-tinted face. The tiger body flowed up the steps, transfixing itself into the slender body of the girl, which stood there shuddering, her black hair veiling arms that were torn and scratched. One hand

was drawn across her lips and came away stained darkly. Then she saw Dineen in the porch chair.

Page leaped furiously to life in her tired flesh.

"Turn, how dare you sleep here? Long have we nursed you through fever. The night chill will bring it on again."

"I'm not afraid of night chill or ghost tigers!" he said gently.

He heard a gasping sob as she vanished in the house, heard her cot creak as she dropped on it to sleep.

That day Dineen sent for Inham, who was plainly reluctant to speak of the fate of Bourke or the rise to fetch Omar Sung Lo, tiger-trapping, until Dineen forced him to talk by mentioning that Inham had deserted him in the jungle, a crime for which the punishment was severe if complaint was made.

"I shall not interfere with your affairs, Inham, but I want some questions answered. Otherwise—" his tone held a threat. "Now tell me what became of the helpers of that Chinese surgeon in the jungle kangyong?"

"Turn, they were killed by a tigress and the ants have picked their bones."

"And your knowswoman in this house, had she a hand in that vengeance, Inham?" he asked.

"Of a truth, Turn, is she not the widow of a white Turn the Chinese devil? killed? More I cannot answer, except that what is written, is written."

"Where does Bourke's widow go by night, Inham?"

"Turn, I dare not follow her to know."

"But you know where she goes, Inham."

"Turn, I know only that what is written, is written!"

"Where is Omar Sung Lo, Inham?"

"Word comes that he is on his way to trap tigers and should be here soon."

The widow slept all that day. Intrigued and curious about her, Dineen came to her couch and stood looking down through the mosquito-netting. An impulse prompted him to kiss the low pantom softly. Hearing it in her sleep, she stirred and sighed and began to murmur words. Dineen listened shamelessly.

"Beloved . . . five have I killed . . . I leaped from the gloom. My fangs gripped and shook them. A golden death all too merciful for such dogs. They were his men, Beloved . . . And I have his secret. Your murderer shall not escape long."

Dineen went quietly away and sat brooding on the mysterious and uncanny problem until tiffin, but the widow did not appear. He finally went to bed but lay awake, and as the moon sailed high he was aware of her soundless gliding to the door and into the flower hedge. He followed and found the black sari she had left there.

He had slept that afternoon and had no difficulty staying awake until the hour she returned. From inside the house he watched again until he heard the soft thud of bounding paws and distinctly saw by a moon late enough to leave its frail ghost by dawnlight, the striped body of the tigress transformed as it glided over the porch, into the body of Bourke's widow. He saw the startling green glow of her eyes as she went to her room. That morning he stood beside her again and saw the change in her appearance. She had been a dainty, perfumed creature. Now her face was haggard, her amber-coloured flesh was scrawled, her nails were broken and grimed, and about her was the fetid odor of the great carnivore's breath, faint yet distinct.

As he watched, her body moved, stretched and coiled again like a cat, and her fingers flexed and spread like claws. Darsen touched her wrist. Without a movement her eyes opened their glowing green fire, yet in the light the iris narrowed to a thin slit of emerald flame. Her head rubbed against his arm, and like a kitten her tongue licked at his hand.

He jerked back and spoke sharply. Blood oozed to the surface of the skin her tongue had rasped. Then he regretted speaking, for she awakened fully, and he saw she was bewildered, and shuddered convulsively, moaning a little.

"I dreamed, Tsun! I dreamed I was caught in a trap!"

"Then take warning," he said gently. "Leave vengeance to the gods." Then, ashamed of a speech that betrayed his own weak slipping into a belief in this dreadful metempsychosis, he left her abruptly, thinking it was high time he closed out and went back to the haunts of his own logical-minded race.

"Tomorrow I leave," he announced to her late that afternoon.

She did not demur, and as usual disappeared as the moon rose. As before, he waited until dawn, but this time his vigil was fruitless. She did not return. Remembering that she sometimes stayed away for a few days, he was not alarmed until Inham came running in the noonday heat when no native willingly stirs abroad. He was greatly upset and excited and almost incoherent as he blurted out the news that Omar Sung Lee had trapped a splendid tigress and was shipping her back to his kingdom.

"Tsun, you must buy this tigress and set it free," urged Inham. "I tried to buy it. I offered all I possessed and all my kindfolk possessed, but he will not sell. Tsun, he trapped the tigress with bags of white dust he scattered, a magic powder that made her forget her cunning and run in it like a cub at play. But she must be freed, Tsun. Buy her. By your hope of Paradise, you must free this tigress."

Darsen leaned forward in his chair, staring at the agitated Inham. "Why should I set this tigress free?" he demanded.

"By the spirit of Tsun Bourke who was your friend, you must. Tsun,

it is past the belief of a white Tswana. But the tigress is my kinswoman, the wife of Tuan Rourke!"

"Nonsense," shouted Dincen. "You lie to me!"

"Turn, I speak truth. She is a tigress *horbantu*. A ghost tigress."

"Then why should cage bars hold her, husband?"

"Twas, it is that magic tiger dust of Omar Sung Leo dragging her across. She lies contented licking it, rolling in the dirty straw, she who loved perfumes and silks and jewels. Twas, see her and know if I lie to you. She wears the pearls you gave her on her neck!"

Dincen laughed harshly. These nightmares were sending him mad. Reason was tottering. He would get out at once. Isham agreed to go with him, but when they started from the village they learned that Omar Sung Leo had gone, the tigress was on her way to his *kampong*. Dincen now by a desire to see the finish of the affair, Dincen followed. The lumbering cage on cart-wheels, drawn by oxen, was somewhere on the river road, but Dincen took a boat and some time in the night he passed it.

He waited in the village until word came that Omar Sung Leo had returned. Then with a loaded gun in his pocket he went to the *kampong*.

Omar Sung Leo stood at the gate and barred his way belligerently. Smiling and defiant, he said he had nothing for sale.

"You captured a tigress. I will buy her," said Dincen.

"She is not for sale, Twas. Down her black throat has gone more of my magic powder than she is worth. Yet I have an affection for the beast and will not sell her."

"Let me see her!" Dincen's gun poked the belly of Omar Sung Leo and his finger curved on the trigger. The dealer started and backed toward the *kampong* where the tigress lay in her cage on dirty purple grass, her tongue lolling thirstily, her eyes glowing green with hate and fear. She crouched and snarled as Omar Sung Leo came near, and her little paw reached through the bars.

Dincen held Omar Sung Leo in a corner by the cage, with his gun still indenting the brown skin. The cries of Omar fell on heedless ears. Dincen began to whistle, then to sing the tune of the love panton he had heard Rourke's wife sing, and again heard roared from the throat of a bull ape in the jungle.

The effect on the tigress was startling. She lifted her head and roared. She worked herself into a fury and her long claws tore splinters from the cage bars. Then she went into a frenzy that made the wooden crate creak and strain. Omar stretched in fear, his defiance was gone.

"Twas, she was kept without food or water, but the cage bars cannot hold her now. They are breaking!"

It was true. Two of the bars were gone. The head of the tigress and

one feeling came through. Omar Sing Loo's shaking fingers grabbed a sack of tiger dust from his loin-bag and he tried to loosen the string.

The tigress leaped to earth, and came toward them, her great pads stepping deliberately, daintily, but she was snarling her rage. Fear-stricken, Omar shook the sack of tiger dust, but a hot wind carried it high in air, over the pond. His scream was pitiful, but it was cut short as the tigress leaped.

Dineen whirled as he saw the animal's jaws fasten on the neck of Omar, and she shook him like a rat. His body fell and lay still, blood pulsing from his neck into the dust. Over him the tigress stood, her ears laid back, snarling at Dineen. He saw her body flatten, her muscles gathered to leap.

There came the quick staccato of gunshots and the beautiful beast dropped slowly over the body of the man she had killed.

Dineen dashed toward the gate. There he halted to look back. He stared, rubbed his eyes and retraced his steps. A cry of near madness came from his lips.

In the sun-baked kaupong dust lay the dead Omar Sing Loo, face down, and over his shoulders was the amber-tinted body of a woman. Blood drained like scarlet ribbons from the bullet wounds in her breast. About her neck was the string of small pearls he had given the wife of Tam Fouket! But it seemed to him her lips smiled and in her partly opened eyes was a look of triumph slowly dawning as they glazed in the shell of death.

An Episode of Cathedral History

by M. R. James

"An Episode of Cathedral History" is one of the least repeated tales of the late President of Eton College, Dr. Montague Rhodes James. But it is one of the few James stories singled out by M. P. Lovecraft as worth special note. In "Supernatural Horror in Literature," Lovecraft summarizes the rules laid down by Dr. James for the macabre tale. "A ghost story, he believes, should have a familiar setting in the modern period, in order to approach closely the reader's sphere of existence. Its spectral phenomena should be unobtrusive rather than beneficent, since fear is the emotion primarily to be excited. And finally the technical pattern of occultism or pseudo-science ought to be avoided lest the charm be smothered in unconvincing pedantry." The reader will note for himself how Dr. James upheld these rules to work his harpish theme.

THERE WAS once a learned gentleman who was deputed to examine and report upon the archives of the Cathedral of Southminster. The examination of these records demanded a very considerable expenditure of time: hence it became advisable for him to engage lodgings in the city; for though the Cathedral body were posture in their offers of hospitality, Mr. Lake felt that he would prefer to be master of his day. This was recognized as reasonable.

The Dean eventually wrote advising Mr. Lake, if he were not already suited, to communicate with Mr. Worby, the principal Vergor, who occupied a house convenient to the church and was prepared to take in a quiet lodger for three or four weeks. Such an arrangement was precisely what Mr. Lake desired. Terms were easily agreed upon, and early in December, like another Mr. Datchery (as he remarked to himself), the investigator found himself in the occupation of a very comfortable room in an ancient and "cathedral" house.

One so familiar with the customs of Cathedral churches, and treated with such obvious consideration by the Dean and Chapter of this Cathedral in particular, could not fail to command the respect of the Head Vergor. Mr. Worby even acquiesced in certain modifications of statements he had been accustomed to offer for years to parties of visitors. Mr. Lake, on his part, found the Vergor a very cheery companion, and took advantage of any occasion that prevented itself for enjoying his conversation when the day's work was over.

One evening, about nine o'clock, Mr. Worby knocked at his lodger's door. "I've occasion," he said, "to go across to the Cathedral. Mr. Lake, and I think I made you a promise when I did so next I would give you the opportunity to see what it looks like at night time. It's quite fine and dry outside, if you care to come."

"To be sure I will, very much obliged to you. Mr. Worby, for thinking of it, but let me get my coat."

"Here it is, sir, and I've another lantern here that you'll find advisable for the steps, as there's no moon."

"Anyone might think we were Jasper and Dantley, over again, mightn't they?" said Lake, as they crossed the clove, for he had ascertained that the Verger had read *Edwin Drood*.

"Well, so they might," said Mr. Worby, with a short laugh. "Though I don't know whether we ought to take it as a compliment. Odd ways, I often think, they had at that Cathedral, don't it seem so to you, sir? Full choral matins at seven o'clock in the morning all the year round. Wouldn't suit our boys' voices nowadays, and I think there's one or two of the men would be applying for a rise if the Chapter was to bring it in—particular the alms."

They were now at the south-west door. As Mr. Worby was unlocking it, Lake said, "Did you ever find anybody locked in here by accident?"

"Twice I did. One was a drunk sailor, however he got in I don't know. I s'pose he went to sleep in the service, but by the time I got to him he was praying fit to bring the roof in. Lor! what a noise that man did make! and it was the first time he'd been inside a church for ten years, and bless it ever he'd try it again. The other was an old sheep; them boys it was, up to their games. That was the last time they tried it on, though. There, sir, now you see what we look like, our late Dean used now and again to bring parties in, but he preferred a moon-light night, and there was a pair of verse he'd coast to 'em, relating to a Scotch cathedral. I understand, but I don't know. I almost think the effect's better when it's all dark-like. Seams to add to the size and height. Now if you won't mind stopping somewhere in the nave while I go up into the choir where my business lays, you'll see what I mean."

Accordingly Lake waited, leaning against a pillar, and watched the light wavering along the length of the church, and up the steps into the choir, until it was intercepted by some screen or other furniture, which only allowed the reflection to be seen on the pavement roof. Not many minutes had passed before Worby reappeared at the door of the choir and by waving his lantern signalled to Lake to rejoin him.

"I suppose it is Worby and not a substitute," thought Lake to himself, as he walked up the nave. There was, in fact, nothing untoward.

Worby showed him the papers which he had come to fetch out of the Dean's stall, and asked him what he thought of the spectacle. Lake agreed that it was well worth seeing. "I suppose," he said, as they walked towards the altar-steps together, "that you're too much used to going about here at night to feel nervous—but you must get a start every now and then, don't you, when a book falls down or a door swings to?"

"No, Mr. Lake, I can't say I think much about noises, not nowadays: I'm much more afraid of finding an escape of gas or a burst in the drive pipes than anything else. Still there have been times, years ago. Did you notice that plain altar-tomb there—fifteenth century we say it is. I don't know if you agree to that? Well, if you didn't look at it, just come back and give it a glance, if you'd be so good." It was on the north side of the choir, and rather awkwardly placed, only about three feet from the enclosing stone screen. Quite plain, as the Verger had said, but for some ordinary stone panelling. A metal cross of some size on the northman side (that next to the screen) was the solitary feature of any interest.

Lake agreed that it was not earlier than the Perpendicular period. "But," he said, "unless it's the tomb of some remarkable person, you'll forgive me for saying that I don't think it's particularly noteworthy."

"Well, I can't say as it is the tomb of anybody noted in 'istory," said Worby, who had a dry smile on his face. "For we don't own any record whatsoever of who it was put up to. For all that, if you've half an hour to spare, so, when we get back to the house, Mr. Lake, I could tell you a tale about that tomb. I won't begin on it now, it strikes cold here, and we don't want to be dawdling about all night."

"Of course I should like to hear it immensely."

"Very well, sir, you shall. Now if I might put a question to you," he went on, as they passed down the choir aisle "in our little local guide—and not only there, but in the little book on our Cathedral in the series—you'll find it stated that this portion of the building was erected previous to the twelfth century. Now of course I should be glad enough to take that view, but—mind the step, sir—but, I put it to you—does the lay of the stone 'ere in this portion of the wall (which he tapped with his key), does it to your eye carry the flavour of what you might call *Seven* masonry? No, I thought not, no more it does to mine, if you'll believe me. I've said as much to three men—one's the librarian of our Free Library here, and the other came down from London on purpose—fifty times, if I have ones; but I might just as well have talked to that bit of stonework. But then it is, I suppose every one's got their opinion."

The discussion of this peculiar trait of human nature occupied Mr. Worby almost up to the moment when he and Lake re-entered the turner's house. The condition of the fire in Lake's sitting-room led

to a suggestion from Mr. Worby that they should finish the evening in his own parlour. We find them accordingly settled there some short time afterwards.

Mr. Worby made his story a long one, and I will not undertake to tell it wholly in his own words, or in his own order. Lake committed the substance of it to paper immediately after hearing it, together with some few passages of the narrative which had fixed themselves verbatim in his mind; I shall probably find it expedient to condense Lake's record to some extent.

Mr. Worby was born, it appeared, about the year 1828. His father before him had been connected with the Cathedral, and likewise his grandfather. One or both had been chorists, and in later life both had done work as mason and carpenter respectively about the fabric. Worby himself, though powered, as he frankly acknowledged, of an indifferent voice, had been drafted into the choir at about ten years of age.

It was in 1849 that the wave of the Gothic revival swept the Cathedral of Southminster. "There was a lot of lively stuff went then, sir," said Worby, with a sigh. "My father couldn't hardly believe it when he got his orders to clear out the choir. There was a new dean just come in—Dean Bunsough it was—and my father had been 'promised' to a good firm of painters in the city, and knew what good work was when he saw it. Good it was, he used to say; all that beautiful wannet oak, as good as the day it was put up, and garlands-like of foliage and fruit, and lively old gilding work on the coats of arms and the organ pipes. All went to the timber yard—every bit except some little pieces worked up in the Lady Chapel, and 'ere in this overmantel. Well, I may be mistaken, but I say our choir never looked as well since. Still there was a lot found out about the history of the church, and no doubt but what it did stand in need of repair. There was very few workers passed but what we'd lose a pinnacle." Mr. Lake expressed his concurrence with Worby's views of restoration, but owns to a fear about this point lest the story proper should never be reached. Possibly this was perceptible in his manner.

Worby hesitated to resume him. Not but what I could carry on about that topic, he hints (it is true, and do do when I see my opportunity. But Dean Bunsough he was very set on the Gothic period, and nothing would serve him but everything must be made agreeable to that. And one morning after service he appointed for my father to meet him in the choir, and he came back after he'd taken off his robes in the vestry, and he'd got a roll of paper with him, and the varger that was then brought in a table, and they began spreading it out on the table with paper books to keep it down, and my father helped 'em, and he saw it was a picture of the inside of a choir in a Cathedral, and the Dean—he was a quick-spoken gentleman—he says, 'Well, Worby,

what do you think of that? 'Why,' says my father, 'I don't think I've the pleasure of knowing that view. Would that be Hereford Cathedral, Mr. Dean?' 'No, Worby,' says the Dean, 'that's Southminster Cathedral as we hope to see it before many years.' 'In-deed, sir,' says my father, and that was all he did say—leastways to the Dean—but he tried to tell me he felt really faint in himself when he looked round our choir as I can remember it, all comfortable and furnished-like, and then see this nasty little dry picture, as he called it, drawn out by some London indolent. Well, there I am again. But you'll see what I mean if you look at this old view."

Worby reached down a framed print from the wall. "Well, the long and the short of it was that the Dean he handed over to my father a copy of an order of the Chapter that he was to clear out every bit of the choir—make a clean sweep—ready for the new work that was being designed up in town, and he was to put it in hand as soon as ever he could get the breakers together. Now then, sir, if you look at that view, you'll see where the pulpit used to stand: that's what I want you to notice, if you please." It was, indeed, easily seen, an unusually large structure of timber with a dained sounding-board, standing at the east end of the stalls on the north side of the choir, facing the bishop's throne. Worby proceeded to explain that during the alterations, services were held in the nave, the members of the choir being thereby disappointed of an anticipated holiday, and the organist in particular incurring the suspicion of having wilfully damaged the mechanism of the temporary organ that was hired at considerable expense from London.

The work of demolition began with the choir screen and organ loft, and proceeded gradually eastwards, disclosing, as Worby said, many interesting features of older work. While this was going on, the members of the Chapter were, naturally, in and about the choir a great deal, and it soon became apparent to the elder Worby—who could not help overhearing some of their talk—that, on the part of the senior Canon especially, there must have been a good deal of disagreement before the policy now being carried out had been adopted. Some were of opinion that they should catch their deaths of cold in the return-stalls, unprotected by a screen from the draughts in the nave; others objected to being exposed to the views of persons in the choir aisle, especially, they said, during the sermons, when they found it helpful to listen in a posture which was liable to misconstruction. The strongest opposition, however, came from the oldest of the body, who up to the last moment objected to the removal of the pulpit. "You ought not to touch it, Mr. Dean," he said with great emphasis one morning, when the two were standing before it: "you don't know what mischief you may do." "Mischief? It's not a work of any particular merit, Canon." "Don't call me Canon," said the old man with great

aspirity, "that is, for thirty years I've been known as Dr. Aylott, and I shall be obliged, Mr. Dean, if you would kindly humour me in that matter. And as to the pulpit (which I've preached from for thirty years, though I don't trust on that), all I'll say is, I know you're doing wrong in moving it." "But what sense could there be, my dear Doctor, in leaving it where it is, when we're sitting up the rest of the choir in a totally different style? What reason could be given—apart from the look of the thing?" "Reason! reason!" and old Dr. Aylott, "if you young men—if I may say so without any disrespect, Mr. Dean—if you'd only listen to reason a little, and not be always asking for it, we should get on better. But there, I've said my say." The old gentleman hobbled off, and as it proved, never entered the Cathedral again. The season—it was a hot summer—turned sickly on a sudden. Dr. Aylott was one of the first to go, with acute infection of the muscles of the thorax, which took him painfully at night. And at many services the number of choirmen and boys was very thin.

Meanwhile the pulpit had been done away with. In fact, the sounding-board (part of which still exists as a table in a summer-house in the palace garden) was taken down within an hour or two of Dr. Aylott's protest. The removal of the base—not effected without considerable trouble—disclosed to view, greatly to the mortification of the restoring party, an altar-tomb—the tomb, of course, to which Worby had attracted Lake's attention that same evening. Much fruitless research was expended in attempts to identify the occupant; from that day to this he has never had a name put to him. The structure had been most carefully holed in under the pulpit base, so that such slight ornament as it possessed was not defaced, only on the north side of it there was what looked like an injury, a gap between two of the slabs composing the side. It might be two or three inches across. Palmer, the mason, was directed to fill it up in a week's time, when he came to do some other small jobs near that part of the choir.

The season was undoubtedly a very trying one. Whether the church was built on a site that had once been a marsh, as was suggested, or for whatever reason, the residents in its immediate neighborhood had, many of them, but little enjoyment of the exquisite sunny days and the calm nights of August and September. To several of the older people—Dr. Aylott, among others, as we have seen—the summer proved downright fatal, but even among the younger, few escaped either a sojourn in bed for a matter of weeks, or at the least, a brooding sense of oppression, accompanied by hateful nightmares. Gradually there formulated itself a suspicion—which grew into a conviction—that the alterations in the Cathedral had something to say in the matter. The widow of a former old verger, a possessor of the Chapter of Southminster, was visited by dreams, which she related to her friends, of a shape that slipped out of the little door of the south

transcript in the dark fell in, and fitted—taking a fresh direction every night—about the Close, disappearing for a while in house after house, and finally emerging again when the night sky was paling. She could see nothing of it, she said, but that it was a moving form: only she had an impression that when it returned to the church, as it seemed to do in the end of the dream, it turned its head: and then, she could not tell why, but she thought it had red eyes. Worby remembered hearing the old lady tell this dream at a tea-party in the home of the chapter clerk. Its recurrence might, perhaps, he said, be taken as a symptom of approaching illness; at any rate before the end of September the old lady was in her grave.

The interest excited by the restoration of this great church was not confined to its own county. One day that summer an F.S.A., of some celebrity, visited the place. His business was to write an account of the discoveries that had been made, for the Society of Antiquaries, and his wife, who accompanied him, was to make a series of illustrative drawings for his report. In the morning she employed herself in making a general sketch of the choir; in the afternoon she devoted herself to details. She first drew the newly exposed altar-tomb, and when that was finished, she called her husband's attention to a beautiful piece of diaper-ment on the screen just behind it, which had, like the tomb itself, been completely concealed by the pulpit. Of course, he said, an illustration of that must be made, so she seated herself on the tomb and began a careful drawing which occupied her till dusk.

Her husband had by this time finished his work of measuring and description, and they agreed that it was time to be getting back to their hotel. "You may as well brush my skirt, Frank," said the lady, "it must have got covered with dust, I'm sure." He obeyed dutifully; but, after a moment, he said, "I don't know whether you value this dress particularly, my dear, but I'm inclined to think it's seen its best days. There's a great bit of it gone." "Gone? Where?" said she. "I don't know where it's gone, but it's off at the bottom edge behind here." She pulled it hastily into sight, and was horrified to find a jagged tear extending some way into the substance of the stuff. Very much, she said, as if a dog had rent it away. The dress was in any case, hopelessly spoiled, to her great vexation, and though they looked everywhere, the missing piece could not be found. There were many ways, they concluded, in which the injury might have come about, for the choir was full of old bits of woodwork with nails sticking out of them. Finally, they could only suppose that one of these had caused the mischief, and that the workman, who had been about all day, had carried off the particular piece with the fragment of dress still attached to it.

It was about this time, Worby thought, that his little dog began to wear an anxious expression when the hour for it to be put into the shed in the back yard approached. (For his mother had ordered that

it must not sleep in the house.) One evening, he said, when he was just going to pick it up and carry it out, it looked at him "like a Christian, and waved its 'and, I was going to say—well, you know 'ow they do carry on sometimes, and the end of it was I put it under my coat, and 'oddled it upstans—and I'm afraid I as good as deceived my poor mother on the subject. After that the dog acted very artful with 'iding itself under the bed for half an hour or more before bed-time came, and we worked it so as my mother never found out what we'd done." Of course Worby was glad of its company anyhow, but more particularly when the nuisance that is still remembered in Southminster as "the crying" set in.

"Night after night," said Worby, "that dog seemed to know it was coming, he'd creep out, he would, and snuggle into the bed and cuddle right up to me shivering, and when the crying come he'd be like a wild thing, shoving his head under my arm, and I was fully aware as had, six or seven times we'd hear it, not more, and when he'd dror out he'd again I'd know it was over for that night. What was it like, sir? Well, I never heard but one thing that seemed to hit it off. I happened to be playing about in the Close, and there was two of the Canons met and said 'Good morning' one to another. 'Sleep well last night?' says one—it was Mr. Henslow that one, and Mr. Lyall was the other. 'Can't say I did,' says Mr. Lyall, rather too much of Southminster. 'I'd for me,' 'xxv. 14' says Mr. Henslow, 'what's that?' 'You call yourself a Bible reader?' says Mr. Lyall. (Mr. Henslow, you must know, he was one of what used to be termed Simon's lot—pretty much what we should call the Evangelical party.) 'You go and look it up.' I wanted to know what he was getting at myself, and so off I ran home and got out my own Bible, and there it was 'the water shall cry to his fellow.' Well, I thought, is that what we've been listening to these past nights? and I tell you it made me look over my shoulder a time or two. Of course I'd asked my father and mother about what it could be before that, but they both said it was most likely cats; but they spoke very short, and I could see they was troubled. My word! that was a nose—ugly-like, as if it was calling after someone that wouldn't come. It even you felt you wanted company, it would be when you was waiting for it to begin again. I believe two or three nights there was men put on to watch in different parts of the Close; but they all used to get together in one corner, the nearest they could to the High Street, and nothing came of it.

"Well, the next thing was this. Mr. and mother of the boys—he's in business in the city now as a grocer, like his father before him—we'd gone up in the choir after morning service was over, and we heard old Palmer the mason bellocking to some of his men. So we went up nearer, because we knew he was a nasty old chap and there might be some fun going. It appears Palmer 'd told this man to stop up the

chink in that old tomb. Well, there was this man keeping on saying he'd done it the best he could, and there was Palmer carrying on like all possessed about it. 'Call that making a job of it?' he says. 'If you had your rights you'd get the sack for this. What do you suppose I pay you your wages for? What do you suppose I'm going to say to the Dean and Chapter when they come round, as sure they may do any time, and see where you've been bungling about covering the 'ole place with moss and plaster and lead knows what?' 'Well, master, I done the best I could,' says the man, 'I don't know no more than what you do 'our it come to fall out this way. I tamped it right in the 'ole,' he says, 'and now it's full out,' he says, 'I never see.'

'Fall out?' says old Palmer, 'why it's nowhere near the place. Blowed out, you mean', and he poked up a bit of plaster, and so did I, that was laying up against the screen, three or four feet off, and not dry yet; and old Palmer he looked at it curmudgeon-like, and then he turned round on me and he says, 'Now then, you boys, have you been up to some of your games here?' 'No,' I says, 'I haven't, Mr. Palmer, there's none of us been about here till just this minute', and while I was talking the other boy, Evans, he got looking in through the chink, and I heard him draw in his breath, and he came away sharp and up to us, and says he, 'I believe there's something in there. I saw something shiny.' 'What! I dare say!' says old Palmer, 'well, I ain't got time to stop about there. You, William, you go off and get some more stuff and make a job of it this time, if not, there'll be trouble in my yard,' he says.

So the men he went off, and Palmer too, and us boys stopped behind, and I says to Evans, 'Did you really see anything in there?' 'Yes,' he says, 'I did indeed.' So then I says, 'Let's shove something in and stir it up.' And we tried several of the bits of wood that was laying about, but they were all too big. Then Evans he had a sheet of music he'd brought with him, an anthem or a service, I forget which it was now, and he rolled it up small and shoved it in the chink two or three times he did it, and nothing happened. 'Give it me, boy,' I said, and I had a try. No, nothing happened. Then, I don't know why I thought of it, I'm sure, but I stooped down just opposite the chink and put my two fingers in my mouth and whistled—you know the way—and at that I seemed to think I heard something stirring, and I says to Evans, 'Come away,' I says, 'I don't like this.' 'Oh, rot,' he says, 'give me that roll,' and he took it and shoved it in. And I don't think ever I see anyone go so pale as he did. 'I say, Worby,' he says, 'it's caught, or else someone's got hold of it.' 'Pull it out or leave it,' I says. 'Come and let's get off.' So he gave a good pull, and it came away. Leastways most of it did, but the end was gone. Torn off it was, and Evans looked at it for a second and then he gave a sort of a snook and let it drop, and we both made off out of there as quick as ever we could. When we got

outside Evans says to me, 'Did you see the end of that paper?' 'No,' I says, 'only it was torn.' 'Yea, it was,' he says, 'but it was wet too, and black.' Well, partly because of the light we had, and partly because that music was wanted in a day or two, and we knew there'd be a set-out about it with the organist, we didn't say nothing to anyone else, and I suppose the workmen they swept up the bit that was left along with the rest of the rubbish. But Evans, if you were to ask him this very day about it, he'd stick to it he saw that paper wet and black at the end where it was torn."

After that the boys gave the choir a wide berth, so that Worley was not sure what was the result of the mason's renewed mending of the tomb. Only he made out from fragments of conversation dropped by the workmen passing through the choir that some difficulty had been met with, and that the governor Mr. Palmer to wit had tried his own hand at the job. A little later, he happened to see Mr. Palmer himself knocking at the door of the Deanery and being admitted by the butler. A day or so after that, he gathered from a remark his father let fall at breakfast that something a little out of the common was to be done in the Cathedral after morning service on the morrow. "And I'd just as soon it was to-day," his father added, "I don't see the use of running risks." "Father," I says, "what are you going to do in the Cathedral to-morrow?" And he turned on me as savage as I ever see him—he was a wonderful good tempered man as a general thing, my poor father was. "My lad," he says, "I'll trouble you not to go pecking up your elders' and betters' talk: it's not manners and it's not straight. What I'm going to do or not going to do in the Cathedral to-morrow is none of your business: and if I catch sight of you hanging about the place to-morrow after your work's done, I'll send you home with a flea in your ear. Now you mind that." Of course I said I was very sorry and that, and equally of course I went off and had my plane with Evans. We knew there was a stan up in the corner of the transept which you can get up to the triborium, and in them days the door to it was pretty well always open, and even if it wasn't we knew the key usually laid under a bit of nothing laid by. So we made up our minds we'd be putting away music and that, next morning while the rest of the boys was clearing off, and then slip up the stairs and watch from the triborium if there was any signs of work going on.

"Well, that same night I dropped off asleep as sound as a boy does, and all of a sudden the dog woke me up, coming into the bed, and thought I was waking going to get it sharp, for he seemed more frightened than usual. After about five minutes were enough came this way. I can't give you no idea what it was like, and so near too—nearer than I'd heard it yet—and a funny thing, Mr. Lake, you know what a place this Close is for an echo, and particular if you stand this side of it. Well, this crying never made no sign of no echo at all. But, as I said, it

was dreadful near this night, and on the top of the start I got with hearing it, I got another fright, for I heard something rustling outside in the passage. Now to be sure I thought I was done, but I noticed the dog seemed to perk up a bit, and next there was someone whispered outside the door, and I very near laughed out loud, for I knew it was my father and mother that had got out of bed with the noise. 'What-
ever is it?' says my mother. 'Hush! I don't know,' says my father, excited-like, 'don't disturb the boy. I hope he didn't hear nothing.'

"So, me knowing they were just outside, it made me bolder, and I slipped out of bed across to my little window—giving on the Cloze—but the dog he bored right down to the bottom of the bed—and I looked out. First go off I couldn't see anything. Then right down in the shadow under a buttress I made out what I shall always say was two spots of red—a dull red it was—nothing like a lamp or a fire, but just so as you could pick 'em out of the black shadow. I hadn't but just sighted 'em when it seemed we wasn't the only people that had been disturbed, because I see a window in a house on the left-hand side become lighted up, and the light moving. I just turned my head to make sure of it, and then looked back into the shadow for those two red things, and they were gone, and for all I peered about and stared, there was not a sign more of them. Then come my first fright that night—something come against my bare leg—but that was all right, that was my little dog had come out of bed, and pawing about making a great to-do, only holding his tongue, and me seeing he was quite as spry as a flea, I took him back to bed and we slept the night out!

"Next morning I made out to tell my mother I'd had the dog in my room, and I was surprised, after all she'd said about it before, how quiet she took it. 'Did you?' she says. 'Well, by good rights you ought to go without your breakfast for doing such a thing behind my back. But I don't know as there's any great harm done, only another time you ask my permission, do you hear? A bit after that I said something to my father about having heard the cats again. 'Care?' he says, and he looked over at my poor mother, and she coughed and he says, 'Oh! sh! yes, cats—I believe I heard 'em myself.'

"That was a funny morning altogether—nothing seemed to go right. The organist he stopped in bed, and the minor Canon he forgot it was the 19th day and waited for the Venete; and after a bit the deputy he set off playing the chant for evening, which was a minor, and then the Dean boys were laughing so much they couldn't sing, and when it came to the anthem the solo boy he got took with the giggles, and made out his nose was bleeding, and showed the book at me what hadn't practised the verse and wasn't much of a singer as I had known it. Well, things was rougher, you see, fifty years ago and I got a nip from the counter-tenor behind me that I remembered,

"So we got through somehow and whether the men use the boys

weren't by way of waiting to see whether the Canon in residence—Mr. Henslow it was—would come to the vestries and fine 'em, but I don't believe he did: for one thing I fancy he'd read the wrong lesson for the first time in his life, and knew it. Anyhow, Evans said we didn't find no difficulty in slipping up the stairs as I told you, and when we got up we laid ourselves down flat on our stomachs where we could just stretch our heads out over the old tomb, and we hadn't but just done so when we heard the verger that was then, first shutting the iron porch-gates and locking the southwest door, and then the transept door, so we knew there was something up, and they meant to keep the public out for a bit.

"Next thing was, the Dean and the Canon come in by their door on the north, and then I see my father, and old Palmer, and a couple of their best men, and Palmer stood a talking for a bit with the Dean in the middle of the choir. He had a coil of rope and the men had axes. All of 'em looked a bit nervous. So there they stood talking, and at last I heard the Dean say, 'Well, I've no time to waste, Palmer. If you think that'll satisfy Southwester people, I'll permit it to be done; but I must say this, that never in the whole course of my life have I heard such amount nonsense from a practical man as I hear from you. Don't you agree with me, Henslow?' As far as I could hear Mr. Henslow said something like 'Oh, well' we're told, aren't we, Mr. Dean, not to judge others?' And the Dean he gave a kind of sniff, and walked straight up to the tomb, and took his stand behind it with his back to the screen, and the others they come edging up rather gingerly. Henslow, he stopped on the south side and scratched on his chin, he did. Then the Dean spoke up, 'Palmer,' he says, 'which can you do easiest, get the slab off the top or shaft one of the side slabs?'"

"Old Palmer and his men they pattered about a bit looking round the edge of the top slab and measuring the sides on the south and east and west and everywhere but the north. Henslow said something about it being better to have a try at the south side, because there was more light and more room to move about in. Then my father, who'd been watching of them, went round to the north side, and knelt down and felt of the slab by the shank, and he got up and dusted his knees, and says to the Dean: 'Beg pardon, Mr. Dean, but I think if Mr. Palmer'll try this here slab he'll find it'll come out easy enough. Seems to me one of the men could prise it out with his crow by me an' at the chink.' 'Ah! thank you, Workey,' says the Dean; 'that's a good suggestion. Palmer, let one of your men do that, will you?'

"So the men come round, and put his bar in and bent on it, and just that minute when they were all bending over, and we boys got our heads well over the edge of the triforium, there come a most fearful crash down at the west end of the choir, as if a whole stick of big timber had fallen down a flight of stairs. Well, you can't expect me to

tell you everything that happened all in a minute. Of course there was a terrible commotion. I heard the slab fall out, and the crowbar on the floor, and I heard the Dean say, 'Good God!'

"When I looked down again I saw the Dean tumbled over on the floor, the men was making off down the choir. Henslow was just going to help the Dean up, Palmer was going to stop the men (as he said afterwards) and my father was sitting on the altar step with his face in his hands. The Dean he was very cross. 'I wish to goodness you'd look where you're coming to, Henslow,' he says. 'Why you should all take to you heels when a stick of wood tumbles down I cannot imagine'; and all Henslow could do, explaining he was right away on the other side of the tomb, would not satisfy him.

"Then Palmer came back and reported there was nothing to account for this noise and nothing seemingly fallen down, and when the Dean finished feeling of himself they gathered round—except my father, he sat where he was—and someone lighted up a bit of candle and they looked into the tomb. 'Nothing there,' says the Dean. 'what did I tell you? Stay! here's something. What's that?' a bit of square paper, and a piece of torn stuff—part of a dress it looks like. Both quite modern—no interest whatever. Another time perhaps you'll take the advice of an educated man—or something like that, and off he went,umping a bit, and out through the north door, only as he went he called back angry to Palmer for leaving the door standing open. Palmer called out 'Very sorry, sir,' but he shrugged his shoulders, and Henslow says, 'I fancy Mr. Dean's mistaken. I closed the door behind me, but he's a little upset.' Then Palmer says, 'Why, where's Weaby?' and they saw him sitting on the step and went up to him. He was recovering himself, it seemed, and wiping his forehead, and Palmer helped him up on to his legs, as I was glad to see.

"They were too far off for me to hear what they said, but my father pointed to the north door in the aisle, and Palmer and Henslow both of them looked very surprised and scared. After a bit, my father and Henslow went out of the church, and the others made what haste they could to put the slab back and plaster it in. And about as the clock struck twelve the Cathedral was opened again and us boys made the best of our way home.

"I was in a great taking to know what it was had given my poor father such a turn, and when I got in and found him sitting in his chair taking a glass of quarts, and my mother standing looking anxious at him, I couldn't keep from bursting out and making confession where I'd been. But he didn't seem to take on, not in the way of losing his temper. 'You was there, was you? Well, did you see it?' 'I see everything, father,' I said, 'except when the noise came.' 'Did you see what it was knocked the Dean over?' he says, 'that what come out of the monument? You didn't?' Well, that's a merry.' 'Why, what was it,

father? I said, 'Come, you must have seen it,' he says, 'Didn't you see? A thing like a man, all over hair, and two great eyes to it?'

'Well, that was all I could get out of him that time, and later on he seemed as if he was ashamed of being so frightened, and he used to put me off when I asked him about it. But years after, when I was got to be a grown man, we had more talk now and again on the matter, and he always said the same thing: 'Black it was,' he'd say, 'and a mass of hair, and two legs, and the light caught on its eyes.'

'Well, that's the tale of that tomb, Mr. Lake, it's one we don't tell to our visitors, and I should be obliged to you not to make any use of it till I'm out of the way. I doubt Mr. Evans'll feel the same as I do, if you ask him.'

This proved to be the case. But over twenty years have passed by, and the grass is growing over both Worby and Evans; so Mr. Lake felt no difficulty about communicating his notes—taken in 1880—to me. He accompanied them with a sketch of the tomb and a copy of the short inscription on the metal cross which was affixed at the expense of Dr. Lyall to the centre of the northern side. It was from the Vulgate of Isaiah xxiv., and consisted merely of the three words—

IMI CUBAVIT LAMIA.

puncturing the little man's business-like air. "I talked with the pilot before we crashed, big boy."

"Well? Well?" demanded Johnson.

"There's nothing here. Nothing!" Millet said. "No villages. No cities. No railroads. No radios. Nothing! This part of Canada has been lifeless since way back in 2038."

The three were silent, and for that moment the air was colder and the wind blew with added sharpness. The men shivered and moved together for more warmth.

"Eskimos?" Johnson asked, "there must be Eskimos around here. We'd get food, blubber, fat and all that sort of thing."

Millet slapped his hands together to keep the blood circulating and laughed loudly.

"Point one for civilization!" he said. "These citizens of New Democracy looking for primitive Eskimos to save them! Ha!"

He audibly sobbed and looked about him, and listened to the howling wind.

"There are no Eskimos here," he said, "When the War Disease came we survived. But the Eskimo is extinct."

"Have we got food?" Johnson asked.

"None," Millet said curtly, to dispel all false hopes.

"I am not sure," Weaver said slowly, "but five minutes before we crashed I—I'm sure I saw a thin line of smoke coming up from a valley. That valley there." He pointed toward a mountain range.

"Nonsense!" Millet muttered, looking at the inhospitable icy peaks.

"Nonsense!" Johnson shouted. "What do you mean nonsense? Who are you to say it's nonsense? Maybe there are explorers here. an expedition of some sort. We've nothing to lose. If there's a village we've saved. If not—"

"If not?" Millet asked, smiling.

Johnson ignored him. He drew his meagre overcoat more tightly about him and went out into the whirling snow. The three took one final look at the wreckage of the plane and the bodies that were already covered by a white mantle. Johnson led the way and Weaver followed, his own rapidly becoming numb. Millet, face down to avoid the bite of the wind, brought up the rear.

The sun was already overboard when they reached the mountain top and saw before them in the valley the strange city. It was a city, in the midst of the snow and the wind of arctic winter, and long spirals of grey smoke from snow-crowned factories rose up into the heavens.

Dumbfounded, Millet stared at the city in the valley.

"There!" Johnson said triumphantly, "and you said this part of Canada was uninhabited. That's an industrial city of more than twenty thousand people!"

"In the arctic?" Millet asked, almost talking to himself. "So far

The Day Has Come by Walter Kubacka

We've all read about unexpected disaster that follows the calm of our existence. A shift or gust, or, apparently a dead, leaf on a twig as a harbinger of a past war, will suddenly erupt. Europe, for instance, had centuries to have new cities built on the unpopulated wastes and slabs of both world wars—and those wars, both past, will mark new lessons for every generation. Walter Kubacka presents that lesson against the modern technology of warfare. His unforgettably story of a modern day two hundred years hence is one that ought not to be lost.

HERE WAS a whirling disk of trees past the window. One wing struck a twig and with a mighty crash the plane crashed itself against the mountain.

Some hours passed before Weaver awoke with a throbbing pain in his arm. A cut shoulder was caked with frozen blood and the first thing he found was the icy whistle of the cold wind. He staggered to his feet but fell back, fainting, upon a drift of snow and would have been lost were it not for Millet's strong arm.

"Weaver! Millet shouted above the roaring wind. "Are you all right?"

"I'm okay," Weaver said feebly. "Go to the others."

Millet bent to pick up Weaver's prostrate body and carried it calmly over the soft snow to the meager protection of a nearby cave. Here Johnson was waiting by a small fire that was made from parts of the wreckage. Millet placed the wounded man next to the fire and quickly bandaged the bleeding arm.

"This will have to do," he said as he placed the final knot upon a makeshift sling.

"The others? What about the others?" Weaver asked.

"There are no others," Millet said, "just the three of us. The rest are dead."

"Well, well," the little man, Johnson, said impudently. "Why stand there like that gaping? Do something! We have to get back to civilization! I have an important appointment as Norman next week. The air company will pay for that!"

"We're nowhere near Norman," Millet said, as if taking delight in

permeating the little man's business like air. "I talked with the pilot before we crashed. Big boy."

"Well, well?" demanded Johnson.

"There's nothing here. Nothing!" Millet said. "No villages. No cities. No railroads. No roads. Nothing! This part of Canada has been lifeless since way back in 2038."

The three were silent, and for that moment the air was colder and the wind blew with added sharpness. The men shivered and moved together for more warmth.

"Exhausted?" Johnson asked, "there must be Eskimos around here. We'd get good shelter, far and all that sort of thing."

Millet slapped his hands together to keep the blood circulating and laughed loudly.

"Point out her civilization," he said. "Three centuries of New Device—no looking for primitive Eskimos to save them! Help!"

He suddenly sobered and looked about him, and listened to the howling wind.

"There are no Eskimos here," he said. "When the War Disaster came we survived. But the Eskimos are extinct."

"Have we got food?" Johnson asked.

"None," Millet said calmly, to digest all false hopes.

"I am not sure," Weaver said slowly. "Just five minutes before we crashed I—I'm sure I saw a thin line of smoke coming up from a valley. That valley there." He pointed toward a mountain range.

"Nonsense!" Millet muttered, looking at the impenetrable icy peaks.

"Nonsense!" Johnson shouted. "What do you mean nonsense? Who are you to say it's nonsense? Maybe there are explorers here, an expedition of some sort. We're nothing to her. If there's a village we're saved. If not—"

"If not?" Millet asked, smiling.

Johnson ignored him. He drew his meager overcoat more tightly about him and went out into the whirling snow. The three took one final look at the wreckage of the plane and the bodies that were already covered by a white mantle. Johnson led the way and Weaver followed. He turned rapidly becoming numb. Millet, face down to avoid the bite of the wind, brought up the rear.

The sun was already overhead when they reached the mountain top and saw before them in the valley the strange city. It was a city, in the midst of the snow and the wind of arctic winter, and long spears of grey smoke from snow-covered factories rose up into the darkness. Dumbfounded, Millet stared at the city in the valley.

"There!" Johnson said triumphantly, "and you said this part of Canada was uninhabited! That's an industrial city of more than twenty thousand people!"

"In the arctic?" Millet asked, almost talking to himself. "So far

north?" he raised his arm and pointed to all the sides of the city. "There are no railroads leaving it," he said.

"Maybe they're covered by snow," Johnson said. "Anyway, there are what seem to be flying fields."

They stopped talking and made their perilous way down to the floor of the valley. The descent proved dangerous, for each drift of snow might hide underneath it a deep chasm. By the time they reached the open valley it was nightfall, and the city was a bare three or four miles away.

They saw the lights of the factories go out and the lights of each individual home brighten. The smoke died from the giant chimneys but each individual house had its own tiny waft of smoke pouring out of its own individual chimney.

As they made their way to the city they saw darkness settle upon it. The lights in the homes died down and when they came to its gates the city was asleep.

The streets were empty of people. The three exhausted men broke into one of the homes and collapsed before an electrically glowing fireplace.

For a time Weaver was dully surprised that the owner of the house did not bother to come downstairs and ask what they wanted, but he was much too tired to question that as sleep settled upon him and Millet and Johnson.

Refreshed, the three woke up with the morning sun and found, much to their surprise, that the house was empty.

Whoever was in during the night had already left. There were unmistakable signs of chairs having been moved and curtains lifted. It was a wooden house, wooden furniture, and all in simple style.

"They probably let us sleep, not wanting to disturb us," Johnson said.

"Any food in the house?" Weaver asked. Millet got up, stretched and yawned, and went to a small room which appeared to be a kitchen. He came back with two loaves of bread and a jar of water.

"This is all I could find," he said, cutting the bread and sharing it with Johnson and Millet.

"H'm," murmured Johnson as he bit into the first slice. "Tough bread, but pretty good."

"Any idea what city this is?" Weaver asked, crunching the bread hungrily.

"No," Millet said between thirsty gulps. "Haven't the faintest idea. Factory town, that's evident."

When they had finished eating, they got up to investigate the house but could find nothing that would help them. There was no printed matter of any sort but for one sign which hung, almost reverently, over the mantelpiece. It read: "*The Day Will Come—Be Ready!*"

The other rooms were bare but for necessary furniture and clothes. The three searched the closets until they found warm coats that would fit them.

"This might seem like stealing," Millet said, "but we'll return them when we find out just what position we're in."

With stomachs full and warm clothes, Millet, Weaver and Johnson stepped out of the house into the street. It was bitterly cold but there was no wind. The high mountains that surrounded the valley seemed to protect it from too much snow. Not knowing where to go, they walked aimlessly about the streets. Nowhere could they find a single soul.

"They must all be at the factories," Johnson said.

"And the children?"

"In schools and nurseries."

"But they can't all be in factories and schools," protested Weaver. "There's nobody home or in the streets. Nobody!"

"Let's look into a factory," Millet suggested.

In the center of the city they found two factories. Both were of tremendous size, stretching for many times the size of a city block. From their mighty stacks stretched black fingers of smoke. A strange feeling of age hung about the factory. The windows were unwaikd. Here and there great cracks were in the walls and through them one could see the working men within. The dull roar of the two factories was almost deafening.

"How old it seems!" Weaver gasped.

"Centuries!" Millet whispered.

"Come! Come!" Johnson said briskly, "We won't get anywhere gazing like that. Let's go in this one here."

They walked through the aged gate, into the courtyard, and up the wide steps to the door. They opened it, walked in and almost at once were drawn by the clanging and banging of machines in operation. But above the roar of the machines there was yet another sound—the sound of a man's voice, amplified so that it was a booming monotone, overcoming even the shrill screeches of drills and punches.

"... be careful. Always be careful," the booming voice in the factory rang out. "Do not make mistakes. Efficiency counts above all else. Efficiency! Work carefully. Work carefully. Work carefully. Work carefully and enjoy your work. Enjoy your work. Enjoy your work because it is your work. You are working for yourselves. You are working for yourselves. You are working for yourselves . . ."

And on it went, repeating over and over again the same advice to workmen, urging them to greater efforts and constantly giving them an added impetus for faster and faster work.

"Speed-up deluxe!" Millet said, "What a system!"

Inside the factory they saw the working men and women and chil-

dren. There were thousands of them. Like automatons each leaned forward at his task. Dynamos and power engines, placed in floors beneath the level, poked into life and the conveyor belts moved on. The place was a roaring factory in full blast. Giant cranes screeched along, carrying in their iron hands heavy machines which were placed in position by the waiting workmen. Long lines of coarsely clad men and women stood by the conveyers, each with his or her task. Some of the men handled the delicate tools. Others, the women and the children, did nothing but watch and sometimes help when a moving mass of machines on the belt rattled and shook as it rolled on a bumpy part of the conveyor. Immediately they would run to it, push it back upon the belt and then go back to their position, their eyes intent again upon the older men and the older women who handled the drills and who placed the parts in position.

The three walked along the conveyor belts, surprised that no one stopped them to ask who they were and what they were doing here. They ignored the monotonously droning voice that roared above them, seeming to come from microphones hidden in the roof.

Slowly Millet, Weaver and Johnson began to get the complete picture of the strange factory. Huge boxes were brought in from the outside, obviously from the second factory, and were unpacked. The machinery and parts were assorted and distributed. Motors were sent to one place, girders, wires, steel plates and glass to other places.

The trio followed the distribution from one end to another. By the time they reached the center of the plant they realized what was being made. At the end of the factory, ready to be rolled out, they saw it.

In the center of the huge, open, unrolled dome, final finishing touches being placed upon its wings, stood a giant bomber.

"Warplanes!" Millet shouted to Weaver, trying to make himself heard above the din of the factory, "Giant warplanes!"

"Why hasn't anyone stopped us?" Weaver asked as they strolled under the wings of the bomber and out into the open air. "Nobody ever looked at us while we walked through the whole plant!"

"Suppose they're too busy," Johnson granted.

"Did you see the children?" Weaver asked again. "Even children! What a factory! It's like a tomb!"

"Efficient though, isn't it?" Millet smiled, "They're getting the bombers out fast enough. Let's see where they take them."

They watched a crew of men roll the bomber out of the hangar-like opening. They pushed it half way to the open field and then left it there. Another crew, coming from the second factory, marched to it and then rolled it on—to the second plant. The three men followed.

Once they were inside the second plant with the bomber they saw a strange sight. The finished bomber was rolled on to the center of a scaffold-like structure and the careful work of disassembling and tak-

ing apart the giant plane began. The wings were carefully taken off, each individual plate tugged and unhooked. Not one screw was wasted. Nothing was lost.

"I'll be damned!" Johnson said, astonished.

The three men gathered around and watched. There could be no doubt as to what was being done. The bomber, just finished, was now being taken apart. Its component parts would be packed and sent to the first factory where it would be rebuilt.

"An insane vicious circle!" Weaver said.

"They must be crazy!" Johnson said, "There's no sense in that!"

He stepped forward and seized one of the workmen by the shoulders.

"Hey you!" he shouted, "I want to talk to you! What's going on here?"

The man resisted and tried to get back to his position. When Johnson would not let go he turned quickly and struck at Johnson with his wrench. Johnson yelped a cry of surprised pain and let go. The man immediately went back to his spot by the plane as if nothing had happened.

"Damnit!" Johnson shouted to Millet and Weaver. "He struck me! He's crazy! They're all crazy!"

"In a way," Millet said soberly. "Yes. But let's get out of here first."

They left the factory and entered one of the nearby houses where the glowing warmth of the fire place soothed them.

"All right, Millet," Johnson said, "You seem to know the answers. What's wrong with the city? Everybody seems to be mad. They won't do anything. They just work—work—work! That's enough to drive anybody mad!"

"And the rhythm!" Weaver said. "That mechanical voice in each factory roaring over and over again—work—work—work! Be careful! Be careful! Be careful! What is it all?"

"It's our heritage," Millet said cryptically.

"Heritage? What heritage?"

"Do you remember your history? The story of the Second World War and even the Third?"

"Of course. Of course," Weaver said, "But this mad city—what has that to do with the wars that took place two centuries ago?"

"Two centuries?" Millet said, "That's it exactly! For more than two hundred years that factory has been building bombing planes for a war that ended two hundred years ago!"

"You're crazy yourself!"

"Crazy, eh? Not as crazy as the facts of history!" Millet said, "Do you remember the bombings of the Third World War? Wave after wave of enemy planes came, blowing up the factories and industrial centers of the enemy. Coventry, Hamburg, Detroit! All of them

smashed to bits! When industrial centers were smashed by air-raids, what is the logical answer? Build factories and plants in out-of-the-way places, far from the arm of the airplane!"

"I suppose you'll say that's how this factory was built?"

"Yes! And perhaps there are still more throughout the so-called Cities of living death, still making bombs and bombers after all these centuries. They started something that they could not finish. They'll keep on building those bombers till the machines are worn out and become dumb!"

"But the people—the people!" Weaver protested.

"The people!" Millet started, "Did you hear the phonograph droning over and over again: you must work—you must work—you must work! Over and over again for two hundred years! It enters into the blood. The child is born and hears those words, you must work—you must work—you must work! He spends his days in the factory—watching and watching until the day that his father dies. Then he too goes up to his position—working—working—working. Not knowing why, nor caring to know!"

"But the same planes are taken apart!"

"One factory was built for producing planes. Another for dismantling the wreckage of planes that were shot down or brought in from the outside. This went on for generation and generation until it became mechanical. And when contact with the outside world finally did, what was more natural than that the process should continue? And it goes on— and on—and on!"

"But what of the food, what of their supplies and clothes and power?"

Millet shrugged and gestured vaguely. "There are some smaller factories on the other side of the city. They must be bakeries and auxiliary plants. Grain, supplies . . . supplies were had as from the surplus to last for hundreds of years. These cities expected isolation. They were places of perpetual siege."

A shiver went down Weaver's spine.

"Horrible!" he said.

"Something must be done about it!" Johnson said, indignant.

"What?"

"Stop the factory! Find their source of power—shut it off!"

Millet laughed. "The men would die! They'd go raving mad! You can't stop a thing that's been in the blood for two hundred years! Touch the power plant and they'd rip you to pieces like a wild animal whose food you try to steal!"

"There must be somebody in the city who is intelligent and who has not become a machine," Weaver said. "From the beginning there was some master, some commander who guided things. His descendant might be here. Find him."

"Yes," Millet said, "there might be one somewhere."

"Well! Well!" Johnson shouted, "what are we waiting for?"

It was evening and a shrill whistle broke the darkness. The rumble from the factory died down. The conveyors slowed and stopped and the smoke no longer ascended from the chimney.

Long streams of tired men and women walked dully from the factory. Their thin, gaunt bodies moved slowly over the cobbled snowy streets. Their eyes were misty and each one was stooped as if upon his shoulder the weight of the factory was set.

The three men entered one of the houses. Wordlessly, the woman of the house set three more chairs by the table and placed three more dishes upon it. They ate with the family in silence, and when night came they went to sleep by the fireplace.

In the morning they awoke and followed the family as they dressed and had breakfast. When the whistle of the factory blew the family slowly filed out into the street where hundreds of other families joined them in the procession towards the factory. Wordlessly, Millet, Weaver and Johnson mingled with the people, constantly alert for an eye that was not dull, for a face that had more than a blank stare. But it was the same with everyone. Dull—blank—mechanical—living dead—living machines.

They gathered in long lines outside the factory, and when the second whistle blew they marched slowly in.

The three men watched them go and when all had entered they followed. But instead of entering the plant itself, they walked into all the smaller rooms, hoping to find some clue to the mystery.

On the third floor of the factory, quite by surprise, they found her. The door of a room was slightly ajar.

"There's some rooms here," Millet said, "let's take a look."

Someone inside must have heard them. The door suddenly closed. Millet walked up to it and tried to open it, but it was locked.

"Strange," he said, "the door was open a moment ago."

With his shoulder he pushed tentatively. The wood was old and worn. He stepped back and crashed into the door. It splintered and fell. Millet and the two men entered the room.

Amazed, they stared at the young girl who stood alone, back to the wall, facing them. Her eyes and face did not bear that dull look which characterized every single person in the city. Each movement of hers was cat-like and nervous as she moved along the wall further away from them.

"Hello," Millet said softly.

"A voice!" she said. "You speak!"

"Yes, of course we speak," Millet said, walking a bit towards her. "Don't be afraid. We won't hurt you."

"You—you're from the Outside!" she said, fearfully.

"We're friends," Millet said, "We won't hurt you."

"How did you get here?" she asked suddenly.

"By airplane. We crashed . . ."

"Airplane! Bomber!" she said, her voice becoming high pitched till it was almost a scream. "Then it's true what the books said! You've come here to kill all of us! You came here to destroy the factory! You came here to stop the machines! It's you who wanted the war!"

"No. No." Millet insisted, "We are not going to do anything. Nothing, you understand, nothing. There's no war going on. No war."

"No war!" she cried, "there's always war! Always! The Day will come, my father told me and his father told him. There's always war! ALWAYS! THE DAY HAS COME!"

She pressed herself against the wall, shrinking in terror, her knees weakening until she knelt in the corner. Two tears rolled down her cheeks and then sobbings shook her body.

"Crazy as a loon," Johnson whispered. Millet bent down and tried to soothe her.

"There's nothing to be afraid of," he said softly. "We're not going to do anything. Everything's all right. Just stop crying."

She kept on sobbing and then, her confidence won, Millet put his arms around her until her sobs died down.

"This beats everything," Weaver said, scratching his head.

A few minutes later the three men and the girl sat around the desk. Her face was still wet with tears, but her fear was now gone.

"What's your name?" Millet asked.

"I have none," she said.

"You were born here?"

"Of course!"

"What do you do here?"

"Nothing. I'm the governor of the factory."

Millet repressed a smile and continued, "Why does the factory run?"

"Everybody knows that—to make airplanes."

"But all the airplanes are taken to the other factory where they are simply taken apart! What's the sense to that?"

She looked at him as if not understanding the question. He repeated it.

"Because," she said, "because we've always done so. That's all. Everybody knows that!"

"But why? Why?"

"I don't know," she said sheepily and irritated, "I don't know!"

"Did it ever," he said quietly, "occur to you to stop the machines?"

She stood up, pale with fright and anger.

"Stop the machines?" she asked, trembling. "No! Nobody can do that! Nobody! The factory must go on! It must! It always went on even when the bombers came. Always! Always!"

She was almost hysterical. Millet soothed her and turned to his friends.

"Now try stopping the machines and see what happens!" he said. "This girl is almost normal, think of the others to whom the factory is their heart and soul by birth."

"You're not going to stop the factory! No! No!" she said, "you can't!"

"No," Millet said, "we're not going to stop the factory."

"I always knew," she said softly, "that The Day would come. And it has come! It has come!"

"What Day has come?" Millet asked her, "What Day?"

"The Day when our bombers fly!" she said exultantly, "That Day! I knew it was here when I saw you enter the city!"

"You saw us enter yesterday?" they asked, in great surprise.

"Yes!" she said, "I know. Today is the Day! I told them, the workmen, that they should let the bombers fly!"

"Fly?" Millet asked. "Holy Sun! But whence? Those bombers fly blind. Their destination was set into the controls over two hundred years ago! Even the moment that they drop their bombs is all set!"

"To the enemy!" she said, "They'll bomb his cities! Smash his factories! Destroy his roads and communications! Destroy him!"

Leaving her alone the three men rushed to one of the windows and looked out upon the open field. The day before it was empty. Now, upon its white level, were three large black bombing planes.

"They mustn't fly!" Weaver said. "Heaven only knows upon what cities they'll drop their bombs! What a ghastly thing! Ghosts from the past destroying the cities of today!"

Weaver and Johnson rushed to the door but Millet soon called after them.

"It's too late!" he said, "they're leaving!"

It was true. From the window they could see the whirling blades of the propellers as each bomber slowly moved along the runway and up into the air.

The three bombers, like three strange birds, rose high and flew away over the mountain-tops.

In Millet's mind there was a strange thought. Three black bombing planes, relics of the past, were bombing a glorious new city founded upon peace. What a mockery!

But perhaps the planes would never reach the city. Two hundred years had passed. Perhaps the controls were worn. A wearing of a hundredth of an inch and the three bombers would miss their mark.

Perhaps—but the three planes were already lost in the mists of the clouds. Even the roar of their motors had died away.

After two hundred years the Day had come.

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